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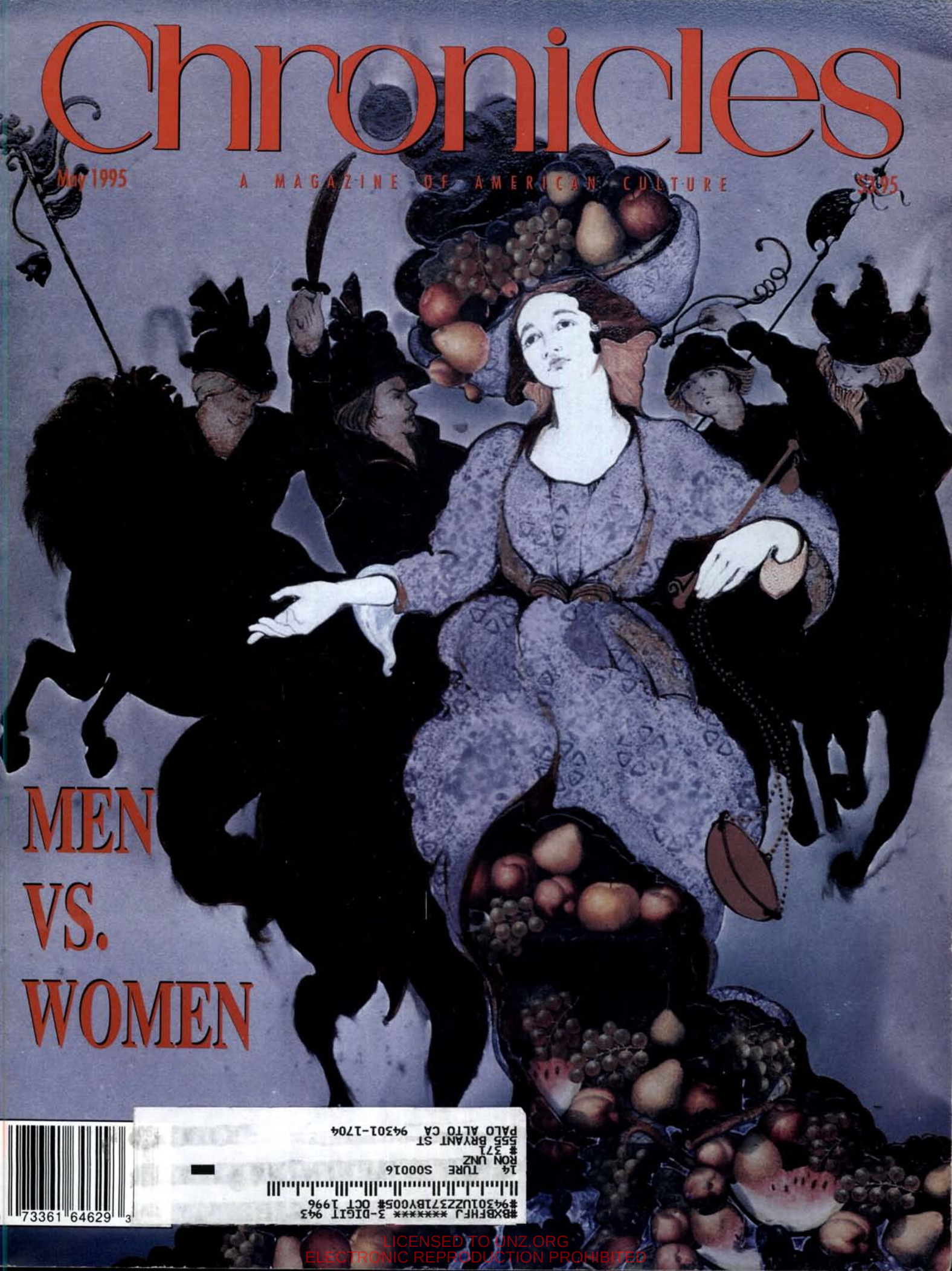

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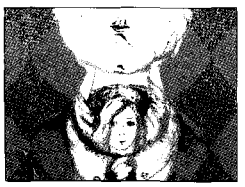
# Chronicles

A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

## PERSPECTIVE

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A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

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## 'What Do Women Want?'

So *Chronicles*, like Freud, is asking the big question in its May issue: "What Do Women Want?" Appropriating the Good Doctor's question, *Chronicles* is also replicating his breathtakingly stupid approach to answering it.

Freud talked at length to his female patients, ignored salient parts of their answers (when he listened at all), and triumphantly dumped his own desires, fears, and obsessions all through his case studies. Not surprisingly, all that he learned was a lot about himself. *Chronicles*' current issue offers a series of men pontificating about women. Granted, it is yet another opportunity for you boys to get some much-needed self-knowledge. But why drag *us* into this exercise in narcissism? Save some time and space and cut out the middle [wo]man.

If, on the other hand, by some chance, contrary to centuries of prevailing practice, you actually want to stop talking about yourselves long enough to consider, however briefly, what the other half of the human race wants, you might just try a real revolutionary tactic. Ask *women* the question. Just for once, listen to what *women* have to say.

Note the plurals. For starters, we want the question "What Do Women Want?" permanently recycled into compost. It's misstated and therefore misleading. Because "Women" is not a monolithic category; no one person can speak for *women*. Lesbian women, for example, may not want exactly what heterosexual women want, and individual lesbians may not want the same things that other lesbians want. Drag queens like Margaret Thatcher and Christina Hoff Sommers, victims of spousal abuse or the glass ceiling, secretaries, astronauts, subsistence farmers, doctors, lawyers, Indian chiefs (oh yes there is: Wilma Mankiller is currently Chief of the Cherokee tribe)—women around the world in offices and nurseries, on kibbutzim and construction projects—they probably don't all want the same things.

To find out what women want, then, you can't just ask a spare woman or two. Particularly not one of those female housepets that the conservative movement keeps around for window dressing to prove that it represents somebody other than angry white men. You need to ask a lot of women, from various places, with differing viewpoints and experiences. And even then you'll have only the beginning of an answer. But at least you'll know just a little bit about something other than yourself.

In answer to the question, then, one thing women want is to be treated as the individuals that we are. We'd also like to be respected enough so that we would be allowed—nay, even encouraged—to speak for ourselves. Some genuinely interested listeners, too, would be a real treat, although we wouldn't think of asking for so much. Nor do we really need to. Because you see, the conversation is going on anyway, across the country, around the world, whether you boys decide to participate in it or chose to continue ignoring it. Women are talking to each other, evolving our own approaches and our own answers to the great issues of our time. It would do you good to listen. At best, working together, we might just save the planet. At worst, you'd get a break from your own endless monologues.

But back to the wish list. Above all, what I want—and what most of the women I know want—is peace in our time and the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness equal to those of white males. We want to be free to do anything for which we meet the standard qualifications, whether it's childcare or combat. One woman acquaintance of mine can tear the Boston phone book in half. In a war I'd much rather she waded ashore under fire than most of the men I know; our nation would be safer. Granted, this woman isn't typical, but even so, why should her sex consign her to the kitchen?

Conservatives direct an unending stream of recklessly incendiary rhetoric against women's rights to control their own bodies, and then are shocked, just shocked and amazed, that those whom they incite firebomb women's clinics and murder doctors and staff. Conservatives attack "Welfare Mothers," as if reproduced by parthenogenesis. Conservatives plan whole magazine issues around *their* answers to *our* questions. And then conservatives wonder about



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the "gender gap."

Congratulations, *Chronicles*, you've textualized it. Even if you had made the prudent decision to throw in an essay by a token woman or two, your plans reveal the basic mentality at work. And it's that mentality that the women I know really do *not* want.

Like *Chronicles*, Freud had ample opportunities to get good answers to his famous question. He ignored them, like *Chronicles*. Is this similarity because of shared conservative values, which, far too often, both in Freud's Vienna a century ago and in the later 20th-century United States, require ignoring the actual concerns of real women?

*—Martine Watson Brownley*
*Women's Studies Program*
*Emory University*
*Atlanta, GA*

## On Crime and Race

Steven Goldberg's honesty ("Black Murder," January 1995) is much to be admired, but it does not penetrate nearly far enough to the causes of racial disparities in crime. What is yet to be acknowledged is the race/crime relationship that is common worldwide. The matrix found within the United States, with Asians being the most law-abiding, Africans the least, and Europeans intermediate, is also evident in other multiracial countries like Britain, Brazil, and Canada. I have published several sets of data from recent *Interpol* yearbooks showing that African and Caribbean countries consistently average double the rate of violent crime (an aggregate of murder, rape, and serious assault) than European countries, and three times more than countries in the Pacific Rim. Whatever the causes of the racial pattern in crime, it is clear that they go beyond American particulars.

One neurohormonal contributor to crime is testosterone. As I review in my book *Race, Evolution, and Behavior*, studies show 3 percent to 19 percent more testosterone in black college students and military veterans than in their white counterparts, with the Japanese showing lower amounts than whites. Sex hormones go everywhere in the body and have been shown to activate many brain-behavior systems involving crime, personality, and sexual behavior. Statistics from the World Health Organization and U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reveal greater sexual activity, higher fertility, and greater rates of AIDS in African than European and East Asian populations. Race differences in crime do not exist independently of these other variables, and they cannot be understood without taking into account biological and neurohormonal processes and ultimately genetic and evolutionary explanations.

*—J. Philippe Rushton*
*Professor of Psychology*
*University of Western Ontario*
*London, Ontario*

# CULTURAL REVOLUTIONS

**WHEN *CHRONICLES*** talks, people listen—at least in New Zealand. I have had my allotted 15 minutes of total fame, all because of a couple of paragraphs snatched by the Kiwi press out of a little piece of mine (Letter From Inner Israel, "Sorting Out Jew-Haters") printed in these pages in March.

Readers will recall that I reflected on the problem of sorting out the many diverse forms of hostility to Jews and Judaism. Specifically, I referred to three incidents I experienced while in New Zealand last summer which set me thinking not about what is, but what is *not*, appropriately labeled "anti-Semitism." I never suggested New Zealand was a fascist, anti-Semitic country—that was the judgment of a professor at Waikato University, whom I quoted and whose outrageous opinion I rejected. The pinpricks I did notice struck me not as anti-Semitic but as gauche, provincial, and uncomprehending. To make that point, I set into context the observations I made during my winter in a cold country, a place far off the beaten track, where little happens that matters to anybody anywhere else—that is, life in nowhere special, where all of us live who are fortunate; in the heart of the human condition.

Since a reporter in Christchurch had taken an interest in my prior reflections on Canterbury University, I sent him an advance copy of the article. He wrote a story about it, and poor O.J. Simpson lost his place to me as the prime American news item in the New Zealand press. The *Christchurch Press* put the story on the Kiwi counterpart to the AP wire; it appeared all over the country. The *Press* even published an editorial of its own—a bit inane, but quite august in all.

But it did not end there—nor with more editorials elsewhere, follow-up stories, and columns and columns of mighty hot letters to the editor. Radio New Zealand called from Wellington for a live interview. When I returned their call, they interrupted their morning talk show to put me right on the air. They spent 30 minutes of expensive trans-Pacific phone time hectoring me on my observations, along the lines of, "Do you really think it's cold on the South Island in July?"

"Yes, very cold."
"Do you think you'll be invited back?"
"Not to Canterbury University."
"Would you go?"
"I'm busy next year and the year after, but try me in 1998."

Finally, at the climax of perfect fame, New Zealand TV asked me to come back to Auckland to take up the argument on their *Sixty Minutes*. "We know what other people say about you, now we want you to have your say." This is summer in New Zealand, so I would help on a slow news day.

When, thinking the controversy somewhat disproportionate, I said I saw no point in pursuing the matter, having



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done several newspaper and radio interviews by phone, they immediately faxed back: "We will pay all expenses for a week's visit, to deal with you and your critics." (Evidently in their first invitation they'd imagined that I would pay my own way!) Meanwhile, back at the University of South Florida, my mailbox and even my voice mail got crowded with letters, phone calls, and even cassette tapes from unhappy Kiwi, some of whom actually signed what they wrote.

A distinguished religious studies professor at the University of Waikato explained the furor to me: "I was intrigued by recent media exposure you have received here. Frankly, I think your own perspectives are right on target—the locals just don't want to be told the harsh truth! New Zealand's worst prejudice is the prejudice that there is no prejudice here! In fact, there is, as you detected so incisively." My mailbox had already told me that. I sent my reporter-colleague, Colin Espiner, at the *Press* a sample of the letters, as well as a tape; he could then judge for himself. But I had not said the place was prejudiced, only provincial, as readers will remember.

In the storm, I had hoped to hear from Canterbury University some voices of reason and perhaps even contrary views, joined with solid evidence and compelling argument. After all, if you want to know about the attitudes of a whole society, you turn not to episodic incidents and hearsay, but to surveys of public opinion, on the one side, and the evidence of systematic analysis on the other. How, for instance, do Maori view New Zealand society—as open or racist? What about the locals of Indian or Chinese origin? (Letters from Indian and Chinese Kiwi confirmed my impression of a rather closed and uncomprehending society.)

What came back may not qualify for a place on *Firing Line*, for reasoned debate gave way to raw emotion, mainly to blind, personal fury. Here is David Novitz, Canterbury professor of philosophy, who is himself Jewish: "Professor Neusner's extreme sensitivity to his Jewishness made it impossible for people to speak to him for very long. . . . Professor Neusner is an excellent scholar in his area of expertise, but that did not qualify him to comment on New Zealand society or the students at Canterbury." "Extreme sensitivity"—that is to say, I'm "too Jewish." I reckon he's not.

Here is William Shepard, Canterbury lecturer in religious studies, who was in charge of my visit: "As the person who had the misfortune of having to host him in our department, I can assure readers that their most negative conclusions about the character of this man and the value of his opinions will probably not be wide of the mark." Shepard is so gauche he can't even deliver a cutting insult.

Here is a man named Henry Tedder, describing himself as "a visiting retired college lecturer from Traverse City, Michigan": "Professor Neusner is nuts. No one reads the magazine his article was published in except the writers and their students who are forced to read them. He reminds me of a jackass braying in the wilderness to his own confusion."

Here is Norman Simms of Waikato University, who was my guest for a year as visiting scholar when I taught at Brown University: "Neusner is prone to arrogance . . . he is known as a man who had never had an unpublished thought in his life." How Simms knows what I haven't published I can't say. Simms was the professor who told me he thinks New Zealand is an anti-Semitic country with a fascist government, so perhaps when I said in these pages that this wasn't so, he took offense. Why he stays there, I don't know.

Here is Professor Norton Moise, a visiting professor at Otago University in physics, who had already written to *Chronicles* and demanded "equal time" to reply to me. As John Gibb reported in the *Otago Daily Times*, Moise "was unhappy that the American publication had apparently seen fit to publish Professor Neusner's views without checking on the views of the many other American academics who had visited Christchurch and New Zealand. Professor Neusner's views were based on a very limited time in this country, could damage New Zealand's reputation abroad and potentially bring other visiting American academics into some disrepute in this country."

Some may find the intellectual quality of the replies a bit disappointing, expecting more than arguments that appeal to "extreme sensitivity," bad character, "arrogance," and so on and so forth. But don't wonder why it was mostly Jews (Shapiro, Novitz, Moise, and Simms) who volunteered to clobber the Jew—for self-hatred marks the hostile society. They prove my case.

And then there are the other outsiders, welcome only on the fringes of Kiwi society: the Americans, Shepard, Shapiro, Moise, Simms, who leaped to defend Kiwidom (Novitz is a South African refugee). But who can have predicted appeal to—of all things—good old American academic snobbery: "My university is better than yours, so shut up and sit down"? Leave it to our crowd to degrade already-despicable discourse. In some circles hereabouts, it's not the power of your ideas that matters, nor what you have accomplished, but who pays your salary—an attitude as Yankee as apple pie, the Fourth of July, and racism.

It was an American teaching at Canterbury, a classicist named Harold Shapiro, who had earlier written to the *Press* and reassured people that University of South Florida students spend all their time on their surf boards (I reckon he's never seen Tampa Bay, where they build the causeways all of six inches above the water surface, to avoid the enormous waves, or perhaps he's confused the Gulf of Mexico with Big Sur). Here is the indignant Norton Moise, visiting-Jewish-American-physicist, delivering his knock-out punch, again in Mr. Gibb's report: "It was ironic that both Canterbury and Otago Universities enjoyed higher international standing than the University of South Florida in Tampa. . . . Canterbury and Otago students were also of a higher overall academic standard than students at the South Florida institution." I asked my colleagues what international standing we at USF enjoy, but they didn't bother to reply—several were overseas, lecturing at foreign universities.

To assess my response to Norton's snobby dismissal of little old USF, with its 36,000 students out on surf boards, the older readers of this magazine may be reminded of President Roosevelt's indignant objection that the Republicans had sunk to criticizing "my little dog Fala." Those guys really hit you where it hurts.

Oh well, now that the Novitzes and the Shepards and the Moises and the Shapiros and the Simmses have vented their spleen, perhaps it is time for a reasoned discussion about issues—if any survive for discussion. Still, if you want to become famous in New Zealand, you can do worse than print an article in these pages. If you're really lucky, you, too, can get to turn down invitations to



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appear on *Sixty Minutes* in Auckland.

Next case.

—*Jacob Neusner*

THE NEH has provided me with several substantial (and highly competitive) grants, and so perhaps I should maintain a discreet silence in the current debate over the proposed abolition of the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts. (Strictly speaking, I am not the recipient, but rather the Principal Investigator for grants received by my university.) But the media and politicians have so vulgarized and trivialized the issue (and when do they ever not?) that there are a few things that need to be said.

In principle, the federal government should not be in the business of subsidizing the arts (NEA). The argument is somewhat less conclusive in regard to scholarship. It is at least moot that there is a proper role for support of certain types of humanistic endeavor that have a "national" purpose. This is the same principle that justifies national parks, the Library of Congress, and the Smithsonian Institution. But in terms of both principle and the amounts of money involved, the NEA and NEH constitute a trivial issue (which is why it has interested the politicians). Doubtless there is more federal money stolen any Thursday in Chicago than the entire annual budget of the NEH and NEA. And considering all the things the federal government *is* doing that it should not be doing—consuming a third of the national income, inflating the currency, bombing Serbs, policing Haitians, incinerating members of obscure religious cults, interfering with schoolchildren, subsidizing the proliferation of illegitimate babies with low IQ's, subsidizing the murder of other babies, etc.—the arts and humanities subsidies are somewhere below number 200 on the list of things that need attention.

Egregious abuses have been perpetrated by the NEA, without any question. But it has not been pointed out that this was largely an administrative failure. The Republicans controlled the executive branch for 12 years. In this broad and goodly land are hundreds of people who are knowledgeable and dedicated in the arts, who are conscientious and talented citizens, and who even voted for Reagan and Bush. Instead of finding such people and getting them into management—the natural thing to do considering that the NEA was, for the nonce, established by law and not going to go away—the Republicans appointed Washington establishmentarians indistinguishable from Democratic appointees. It was under the execrable Frohnmayer, a Bush appointee, that the worst obscenities were perpetrated and defended.

Here, as in so much else, the failure was in the implementation of the "Reagan Revolution." Imagine if, as originally planned, M.E. Bradford, a great gentleman and a great scholar, had been put at the head of the NEH in 1981. Wonderful things might have happened, things that would have been good for the country, the administration, and the cause of scholarship. Instead, neoconservatives took over the NEH and made an effort to turn it into another patronage machine for themselves. They failed, largely due to a dedicated, professional, and honorable staff, and soon moved on to the Department of Education, where they had more luck. The NEH staff, in fact, has a good record of restraining politicization by both neocons and conventional leftists and adhering to responsible standards. Ethically, it certainly compares favorably to Congress, the federal courts, the armed services, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, etc.

Another aspect of the situation that has not been remarked on at all is the scandal of Indirect Costs. Indirect Costs originated with scientific grants which often required maintenance of extensive physical facilities. They were written into the arts and humanities law without rhyme or reason. This means that every time a grant is given to cover the costs of a certain project, the necessary amount is multiplied by a factor of the Indirect Cost rate. The I.C. rate for Harvard University is 200 percent. For my own institution it is 49 percent.

Without I.C., the same projects could be accomplished at much lower cost, or a greater number of projects could be supported with the same amount of money. I.C. constitutes an immense subsidy for the higher education establishment, a hidden agenda. These funds, moreover, are generally at the command of administrators with fewer controls than normally budgeted funds, which explains the famous Stanford University scandal of a few years ago. In addition, the intrusion of I.C. into budgets complicates every potentially worthwhile endeavor. Whatever the case for I.C. in the sciences, they seem unjustifiable in the arts and humanities.

None of us—not even the most knowledgeable Washington insiders—really know at this point what, if anything, will happen in regard to NEA and NEH. If the Republicans really want to dismantle the Great Society, there are a couple of hundred better places to start. What I would recommend, which would be reasonable for Washington, is: abolish the NEA; keep the NEH, with I.C. eliminated. This would both reduce expenditures and preserve what is worthwhile.

—*Clyde Wilson*

ENTITLEMENTS are leading the country headlong to insolvency. These include a whole range of programs such as Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, Medicaid, Medicare, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, Food Stamps, etc. Some entitlements are "permanent appropriations," which means the money to pay for them is automatically appropriated and distributed to whoever meets the criteria for receiving a handout. The two biggest programs in this category are Social Security and Medicare. The sum of interest on the national debt plus permanent appropriations is "mandatory spending," which is known in Washington's parlance as "untouchable."

The figures are startling. This year, Social Security will cost $600 billion, about 40 percent of the federal budget. By 2004, if trends continue, the figure will double. Social Security began going bust when Congress raided it to give money to welfare mamas, alcoholics, and drug addicts and when retirees began to outlast the benefits to which they were entitled. But things will only get worse. Right now, four American workers support one retiree. By 2030, the ratio will have dropped by half.

If what is past is prologue, consider the past three decades of entitlement spending in general. In 1963, 70.4 percent of federal spending was discretionary, meaning Congress had a choice of how much to spend. A decade later, that figure dropped to 55 percent and entitlements had grown to 38 percent of the federal budget, with net interest on the national debt at 7 percent. By the time Ronald Reagan was two years into



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office, entitlements constituted 45 percent of the budget. Net interest was 11.1 percent. Now entitlements consume 47 percent of the budget, with interest on the debt pulling down another 14.1 percent. "Mandatory spending" is now 61.4 percent of the federal budget. By 2030, according to one estimate, the annual deficit will reach $4.1 trillion, the size of the national debt today.

Scared for your kids yet? Listen to even more figures from the Bi-Partisan Commission on Entitlements and Tax Reform: by 2010, entitlements and interest on the national debt will consume the federal budget. By 2030, federal revenues will not cover entitlements. Now the national debt is $10,000 per American. By 2030, the figure will rise to $64,000.

And who are the entitled? Not just ghetto-dwelling, black crackheads scamming the government. About $150 billion in Social Security payments this year will go to households with an income exceeding $50,000, meaning home-owning, white Republicans. Ayn Rand would have called them all "looters," and what these disparate groups of people have in common is an Atlas to shoulder the ponderous burden they represent. That would be the working, taxpaying American.

In any event, a number of lawmakers want reform, and Senator Judd Gregg chaired a Republican commission on entitlements, which was scheduled in March to release a report that suggested a number of "reforms." If all went according to plan, legislation is now coursing through the veins of Capitol Hill's body politic. Gregg rightly observes that the Constitution does not entitle anyone to anything, but he and his well-meaning group do not seem to understand that "reform" is not the answer. Congress should not reform entitlements by "block grants" that would "let the states decide" how to distribute welfare or by tinkering with Social Security to stave off its impending insolvency. If Gregg is right, then entitlements are unconstitutional and must be scrapped.

This cardinal goal ought to be approached by zeroing in first on Social Security, the most important target for a reason that has less to do with the staggering cost of subsidizing the well-to-do Bush generation than with the cultural and social problem it has created: militant old people. "The system was supposed to promote self-sufficiency and independence," says Paul Hewitt of the National Taxpayers Union. "But what it says is 'Don't save, we'll tax your kids'" to pay your freight. In short, claims Hewitt, Social Security has created a "belligerent dependency pitting senior citizens against their children and grandchildren."

Yes, Hewitt notes, Social Security has promoted "independence." But it is the independence of parents from their children, not of parents from the state, almost the exact opposite effect welfare spending has on families in the ghetto. Social Security has created a bottomless chasm between the generations that will worsen with time and is responsible for the shameless and aggressive panhandling in Congress by the American Association of Retired Persons, which owes its clout to 64 million Americans who joined it to get cheap airline tickets and health insurance.

Of course, scuttling the welfare state's ship will not be easy without first getting rid of its crew, meaning the bureaucrats trying to protect their jobs. Yet progress on the issue lies not in firing bureaucrats or converting politicians but in showing middle-class Americans that killing entitlements is required as a matter of principle as well as practicality. Forget about constitutionality for a moment. Toppling the welfare state would eliminate the need for laundering money in the federal bureaucracy, which would mean the states really could decide how they wanted to address the needs of their residents. That's what the House Speaker's "contract" is all about, isn't it?

Maybe it will be hard, if not impossible, for members of Congress to relinquish control over the entitlements on which their power is based. But one thing is certain. By 2010, the money runs out. Then Americans will have a choice: either spend money on legitimate functions of the federal government or turn everything over to the looters. At that point, Atlas may finally shrug.

—*R. Cort Kirkwood*

**OBITER DICTA:** This issue of *Chronicles* features a sequence of poems by Katherine McAlpine, whose terse poetry has often graced our pages in the past. These new poems form an operatic sequence and can be found on page 29. Richard Waller, whose poem "Oratorio in the Ruins" appeared in *Chronicles* last year, has published a volume, *Beethoven's Brain*, containing 44 samples of his work. Another contributor to *Chronicles*, Frederick Feirstein, the author of five books of poetry, is one of five authors whose work is featured in the current *Quarterly Review of Literature*.

The German publishing firm Peter Lang has released a book on the Balkans, *Titoism and Dissidence*, by journalist and *Chronicles* contributor Tomislav Sunic, who currently serves in Croatia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Examining relations between the various ethnic groups of Communist Yugoslavia, whose coexistence is widely supposed to have been "peaceful," Sunic reveals the acute tensions that exploded into open warfare after the collapse of the Yugoslav federation.

In Arizona, the following stores now sell *Chronicles*: Barnes & Noble Superstore, Metro Center, Phoenix; Bookstar, Town & Country Shopping Center, Phoenix; Borders Books and Music, Biltmore Fashion Park, Phoenix; Books Etc., 901 South Mill Avenue, Tempe; Mill Avenews, 1 East 6th Street, Tempe; Tower Records, 821 Mill Street, Tempe; Hastings Books, Music, Video, 1990 McCulloch Boulevard, Suite #4, Lake Havasu City; Northern Arizona News Company, 1709 North East Street, Flagstaff.

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### DRYER-PHOBIA

Since spanking children is illegal in Sweden, a 26-year-old Swedish mother disciplined her rowdy two-year-old son, who enjoyed jumping on freshly laundered clothes, by placing him in a clothes dryer and turning it on for a few spins, reported the *European* last January. Two years after the incident, the mother was charged in a district court with maltreatment after a relative noticed that "the boy had an unusual fear of tumble-dryers."



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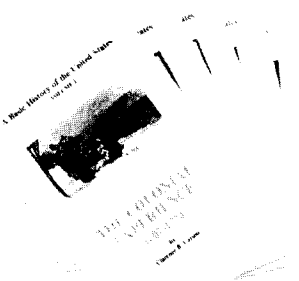

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*by Samuel Francis*

## Voices in the Air

By the middle of the second month of the Republican Revolution, acute observers were beginning to see that the revolution might actually go somewhere if only the Republicans were not in charge of it. Aside from such irritating contretemps as the revelations of Speaker Newt Gingrich's book deal, his instantaneous dumping of historian Christina Jeffrey when her criticisms of a curriculum on the Nazi persecution of European Jews came to light, and his irrepressible habit of unbosoming his every neurological reflex to a bewildered press and citizenry, the prospects of the revolution dimmed considerably when Mr. Gingrich and his counterpart in the Senate, Bob Dole, eagerly signed on to the bailout of a bankrupt Mexico and began to back away from some of their own revolution's commitments.

Mr. Gingrich had second thoughts about ending welfare for immigrants, despite the obvious popular support for doing so, and second thoughts again about repealing the notorious "assault weapons" ban enacted with Republican help in the last months of the previous Congress, despite the obvious debt of the new Republican majority to the votes of outraged gunowners. On all these issues—the bailout, the immigrants, and guns—he was obliged by pressures from within his own party, especially freshmen Republicans considerably to the right of him and Mr. Dole, to reverse himself yet again and exude third thoughts. But since exuding thoughts is never difficult for the Speaker, his political ping-pong was not the problem.

On the more substantive commitments of the party to its "Contract with America" there was definite progress, though many rank-and-file Republicans and conservatives asked themselves exactly why the Contract's sometimes arcane pledges were important at all. Several items in the Contract involving rather radical changes threatened to turn what remains of the Constitution into the kind of voluminous and indecipherable document more familiar to such governments as those of Bolivia and Botswana, and even with a Republican majority in the House, some parts of the Contract could not pass without suffering amputation of their more radical and meaningful provisions. Nor was there any language in the Contract that committed its signatories to eliminating whole departments and agencies of the federal leviathan, abolishing affirmative action, or reversing the ruin inflicted on the Republic by generations of judicial insanity, though individual Republicans did mutter about engaging these issues on their own.

Revolutions, however, exhaust themselves quickly, even when fed by passions considerably fiercer than those known to drive the souls of Republicans, and by locking the House and Senate on the immediate goal of enacting the Contract, the Republican leadership may have ensured that any further and more substantial radical proclivities in Republican breasts would be smothered before they had a chance to squeak. Indeed, even as the 104th Congress convened, it was advised by its self-appointed egghead, Bill Kristol, to eschew serious reforms from the right until the Republicans had also captured the presidency. The Republicans, it seems, were about as ready for their own revolution as a college freshman is to start studying for his final exams.

Yet the main problem with the Republican Revolution comes not from the questionable conduct or judgment of its leaders or from any lack of legislative skills. The main problem is simply that the Republican Party finds it almost impossible to conceive of public policy in anything but economic terms, that it remains wedded to the worldview associated with the myth of Economic Man. No matter how often Republicans dip their knees to "family values," the religious right, and "cultural issues," and no matter how much they exploit patriotic sentiment by contriving to nominate such military titans as Ulysses S. Grant or Colin Powell for President, it is only when dollars and cents are being talked about that the Republican eye begins to gleam and the Republican lip trembles with lachrymose enthusiasm.

The myth of Economic Man is today less a theory of human nature and history than an intellectual archaism from the bourgeois order of the 19th century, when the Republicans led the nation in crushing a region that did not embrace the myth and proceeded to construct around it what was essentially the "Second Republic" of American history between the Civil War and the New Deal. Perhaps the only wise sentence that John Maynard Keynes ever wrote was his well-known insight that "Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist. Madmen in authority, who hear voices in the air, are distilling their frenzy from some academic scribbler of a few years back. I am sure that the power of vested interests is vastly exaggerated compared with the gradual encroachment of ideas." Leaving aside his skepticism about the power of vested interests (a skepticism rather implausible when the Mexican bailout is considered), Lord Keynes could (and may) have been describing the Republican Party of the 20th century.

The myth of Economic Man holds that human beings are driven mainly by considerations of material gain and loss, and therefore that the key to understanding history is the calculation of which economic interests prevail and what those interests are. From that dubious generalization, its adherents elicit a moral imperative, that economic calculations should prevail, and that therefore the value of any course of action, especially public policies, should be judged in terms of whether and how much it enhances material gain. The myth and its derivatives are the foundation stones of both socialism (especially its Marxist version) and capitalism, and it is no accident that Karl Marx was as indebted to the classical economists who helped unleash the myth on the modern mind as he was enchanted by the American Civil War and the Second Republic it initiated as progressive forward steps of world-historical significance. The main practical difference between the socialist and capitalist versions of the myth is simply that each perceives different roads toward their shared goals of the full dinner pail. (It tells us something about both communists and Republicans that they think utopia consists of



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eating out of a bucket.)

In the case of Republicans, almost all of the principal contents of the Contract with America have to do with explicitly economic issues—the balanced budget amendment, the line item veto, unfunded mandates, welfare reform, tax reform, and even the proposal to alter the accounting method by which the cost of American participation in U.N. peacekeeping missions is calculated. Popular discontent with immigration is conveniently dismissed as mere racial scapegoating provoked by economic dislocations, and immigration itself is seen as entirely the result of economic dysfunctions in Latin America. Change the economy, and both immigration and opposition to it will go away. The whole debate over immigration is conventionally conducted only in terms of whether it is good or bad for the American economy, not whether it will alter the basic shape of the national culture. The conventional explanations of urban crime and welfare dependency also are that they are the results of economic incentives foolishly created by urban policies that ignore the universal economic motors of human nature. Create the right incentives through enterprise zones and Project HOPE and we shall end crime, welfare, and poverty. The debates over NAFTA and GATT also were largely confined to their effects on the economy rather than their impact on national sovereignty, and indeed the myth of Economic Man implies that nations themselves are insignificant compared to the appetites for accumulation that drive human individuals.

Hence, it is not surprising that the prophecies of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in *The Communist Manifesto* about the disappearance of the nation-state closely resemble what Mr. Gingrich's main guru, Alvin Toffler, predicts in his pop futurist best-seller, *The Third Wave*. "The workingmen have no country," preached the fathers of communism. "National differences and antagonisms between peoples are daily more and more vanishing, owing to the development of the bourgeoisie, to freedom of commerce, to the world market, to uniformity in the mode of production and in the conditions of life corresponding thereto." Mr. Toffler agrees, writing, "It is questionable how effectively national borders can be sealed off—or for how long. For the shift toward a Third Wave industrial base requires the development of a highly ramified, sensitive, wide open 'neural network' or information system, and attempts by individual nations to dam up data flows may interfere with, rather than accelerate, their own economic development. . . . All such developments—the new economic problems, the new environmental problems, and the new communications technologies—are converging to undermine the position of the nation-state in the global scheme of things."

Of course, in the global scheme of things, just the opposite has come true. Marx's workingmen enthusiastically supported the belligerent nationalisms of World War I, and the collapse of communism and the end of the Cold War have witnessed a nationalist renaissance on every continent. What is interesting about the false predictions, however, is that they were based on economic calculations, and the persistence of nationalist sentiments and energies simply did not fit into the equations of either prophet.

Whether consciously or not, the friends of Economic Man ignore and omit from their calculations, analyses, projections, prophecies, and policies whatever does not fit the mythological assumptions from which their schemes evolve, and therefore they are always shocked to witness mass movements that ignore economic interests and center around charismatic leaders, traditional but practically useless symbols and images, and imperatives that demand exertions that make no economic sense, the postponement of immediate gratification, the denial of sensual satisfactions, and the sacrifice of life itself. Nor can public policies based on this mythology encompass many of the realities around which human existence revolves.

Obviously, economic interests and issues are important, and they are important grounds for evaluating the success of a society or its government; but the coronation of Economic Man as the absolute monarch of modern political thought not only ignores and distorts human reality but also serves to destroy and erase human social and cultural realities the monarch does not much care for anyway. Relying on "the market" as the universal answer to every question of public discussion, the adherents of Economic Man merely accelerate the institutional destruction out of which the power of the mass state emerges as an alternative answer to the questions Economic Men skip over. While Republicans worship at the temple of Economic Man, two prominent social critics from the left have recently noted the social destructiveness the cult promotes.

Historian Eugene Genovese in *The Southern Tradition* remarks that "southern conservatives understand the contradictions that neither Ronald Reagan nor George Bush nor even [!] William Buckley has faced squarely. Capitalism has historically been the greatest solvent of traditional social relations. . . . Ronald Reagan has had every right to celebrate capitalism as the greatest revolutionary force in world history." Similarly, the late Christopher Lasch writes in his posthumous *The Revolt of the Elites* that "The market notoriously tends to universalize itself. It does not easily coexist with institutions that operate according to principles antithetical to itself: schools and universities, newspapers and magazines, charities, families. Sooner or later the market tends to absorb them all. It puts an almost irresistible pressure on every activity to justify itself in the only terms it recognizes: to become a business proposition, to pay its own way, to show black ink on the bottom line. It turns news into entertainment, scholarship into professional careerism, social work into scientific management of poverty. Inexorably it remodels every institution in its own image."

Having enthroned policies informed by the mythologies of Economic Man, Republicans are always amazed to discover that the results are not at all what they predicted and that those who contributed their support to what was advertised as a revolution wanted something other than business as usual. Not only does the myth in which Republican minds are swaddled fail even to acknowledge the noneconomic forces that really drive the popular base of their revolution, but also the myth serves to create new dislocations that the champions of the mass state will exploit to their own advantage. It should not therefore be surprising that the revolution the Republicans have promised us will stall before it leaves the garage and that it will turn out to be no revolution at all. Whoever the academic scribblers from whom the Republican revolutionaries have distilled their frenzy might be, what they are really enthroning is not at all different from the forces to which we have been enslaved since the days of Karl Marx and the revolutionary destruction of the Old Republic. c



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Anna Mycek-Wodecki

# What Do Women Want?

by Thomas Fleming

*Was wollen die Frauen*? Freud's questions are always better than his answers, and even his questions usually betray the diseased mind which poisoned this century with its sexual obsessions. In a healthier age, the question of what women wanted would not have been asked, but as we look out across the wreckage of human social life—the singles' ads in the newspapers, the sex videos advertised so prominently in the *New York Times* book section, the sex hardware hawked in *Harper's*, the strange phenomenon of middle-class women preferring shackups to marriage and going out of their way to bear bastards, the bone-tired mothers who reluctantly put their children in daycare in order to spend eight hours a day in a job they do not particularly like and come home to cook and clean for a husband who will not lift a finger to help them—Freud's question echoes in our ears like the sound of wild dogs barking in a ghost town.

Our friend Professor Kopff has been after us to bestow an annual *Was Wollen die Frauen* award on the woman with the least excusable husband. In the past few years since he first made the suggestion, we have had our choice of any number of women in the public eye. Hillary Rodham might head a Democrat's list. Even conceding that she is exactly what Newt Gingrich's mother said she was, Mrs. Clinton was not born with her mouth turned down in a dyspeptic scowl. Imagine what it is like to be a bright, ambitious woman trying to turn something like Bill Clinton into presidential material in the odd moments she can distract him from chasing girls or striking poses in the mirror. If the dead can be included, then Nicole Brown Simpson deserves an honorable mention, and if we do not insist too much upon the sex of the spouse, so does Lisa Marie Presley.

Perhaps the strangest cases are the women who run off with other women. I used to know a high school Spanish teacher who lost his job for showing erotic foreign films to his students. The last time I ran into him he was trying to negotiate a deal to film the life of Sirhan Sirhan. When I began making fun of the idea, the bartender said, "Leave him alone: his wife just ran off with the Avon lady." Decades before Thelma and Louise, I had been hearing of professors' wives who ran off with each other. What wives, what husbands.

Why do women marry the men they do? In some cases it seems to be the same maternal instinct that impels some women to become nurses. They are so many Honoria Glossops eager to take care of that army of Bertie Woosters who constitute the male sex. In graduate school I knew a lovely and intelligent girl who ended up marrying the ugliest male I have ever known. Looks are not everything, of course, and this guy was surly, arrogant, lazy, cowardly. For a while the young lady was being courted by a friend of mine, who, although not a man I might want for my daughter, was, at least, unambiguously *Homo sapiens sapiens* and, I have to admit it, rather charming. My friend knew that the young lady was a potential



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Florence Nightingale, eager to console the sick at heart, and he confessed to her all his failures, weaknesses, and self-doubts. He was neck-and-neck with his rival until Gargantua announced that his father had died. My friend resigned the field, declaring one night in the graduate seminar room, "I can't top that."

I am not sure I know what it means when so many women marry men they want to take care of. In a general way, the eligibility of bachelors is a sign of social esteem. In a warrior society, strength and courage are the qualities that women look for in a husband; in a plutocracy, it is wealth; and in the most degenerate ages of the world girls go mad for gladiators or film stars with greasy hair and steroid-inflated pectorals. Of course, in more sober times it does not matter too much what women may think they want, because the standards of eligibility are set, not by Hollywood PR men, but by the fathers who want their daughters to produce successful grandchildren.

In higher civilizations, which are universally patriarchal, the girls and boys may have little say in the matter. Why should they? If my genetic future is in the hands of my grandchildren, then I cannot allow the character of my posterity to be determined by a teenager's whim. Marriage is not a sexual romp in a motel room; it is real life, full of disappointments, pain, sickness, failure, and death. Good looks, divorced from other more solid qualities, are mere sex appeal, the quality of film stars and other prostitutes. The sort of husband or wife that parents want for their children would be good-looking, of course, because good looks are an indication of health and an omen of success. But there are other important qualities: the ideal spouse would himself be healthy and come from a healthy stock; he should be as intelligent as his social position demands but no more, since intelligence, when unrewarded, turns to envy and mischief. A potential husband should display courage, self-restraint, but why go on reciting the list of virtues that Aristotle catalogued in the *Nicomachean Ethics*? The obvious point is that since young people cannot possibly make a well-informed marital choice, their parents or guardians should have some say in the matter, if only the power to veto their children's decisions.

In our civilization, before it was Christianized, marriage was a contract between families, not between individuals. Greek sons had some say in selecting their brides, and even daughters knew how to manipulate daddy—as the young Nausicaa does in the *Odyssey*. Roman law was more severe: no unemancipated child could marry or divorce without the father's permission. But even in Rome it was up to the father to enforce his rights. Cicero gritted his teeth and allowed his daughter to choose a (third) husband he did not particularly like.

When Romans began converting to the Christian faith, they did not jettison, all at once, either the ceremonies or rules of marriage. Early Christian weddings were solemnized with the same pagan ceremonies we use today—the vows, the rings, and many of our customs are Roman—and eventually priests were invited in to bless (but not marry) the couple. The important change was Christ's insistence upon marriage as an indissoluble union. Although the concept of the married couple as united in flesh was known both to pagans (e.g., Lucretius) and Jews, it required Christ to repudiate divorce and St. Paul to explain the deeper meaning of marriage. Since Christians conceived of marriage as a mystical union, they could not, in principle, compel their children to marry. On the other hand, the Christian understanding of the duties of parents and children did not include the right to contract a marriage against parental wishes, although the Church did, eventually, step in to validate elopements.

It was not until the Reformation that secular princes began to assume the power to regulate marriage, and since that time parents have gradually abandoned their pretensions to select or even veto the children's selection. It is easy to blame Christianity or the Reformation for the secularization of marriage and the decay of parental responsibility, but the moral and political problems of modern marriage do not admit of facile analysis or glib solutions.

Trollope's novel *Lady Anna* presents the spectacle of a mother and daughter in conflict over a marriage. The mother had married a wicked Earl, who subsequently repudiated the validity of the marriage and the legitimacy of his daughter. After his death, the Countess and her daughter live on the charity of a radical tailor and his son as they attempt to prosecute their claim to the late Earl's personal estate. A young and honorable cousin, who has succeeded to the title, naturally contests their claim until his lawyer, the Solicitor-General, becomes convinced of the justice of the ladies' claims and proposes a marriage scheme as a tidy arrangement for uniting the title with the money. The new Earl is handsome and noble, the Countess's daughter lovely and charming. The Countess, embittered by her sufferings, now begins to hope for a happy issue of all her afflictions, when the daughter, Lady Anna, discloses that she is betrothed to the tailor's son. To a Romantic sensibility, this might be a tale of true love thwarted by ambition and class snobbery, but Trollope takes the case to an aging radical romantic—obviously Wordsworth—who explains to the young man that class distinctions have a purpose. Comparing the old nobility to hothouse plants and the tailor to a "blade of corn out of the open field," the poet concedes that neither species is "higher in God's sight than the other, or better, or of a nobler use." However, they are different, "and though the differences may verge together without evil when the limits are near, I do not believe in graftings so violent as this."

The poet's first response, when he has heard the tailor's account of the affair, goes to the heart of the matter: "When you spoke to the girl of love, should you not have spoken to the mother also?" But conscious of the mother's social ambition, he concealed the betrothal, and Lady Anna, though tempted by the beauty of the Earl's person and by the pleasant dignity of his life, is as tough and persistent as her mother. Her mother's happiness, the fortunes of the family she has learned to admire—all depend upon her decision, but she is true to the radical tailor.

A lesser novelist might have painted the Earl and his family as degenerate aristocrats or given the Countess a more appealing character, but Trollope sees the situation as a conflict not between good and evil but between different kinds of good. When a friend tells her, in a muddled way, that it is her Christian duty to live in the state to which God Almighty has called her, "the nobly born young lady did not in heart deny the truth of the lesson;—but she had learned another lesson, and did not know how to make the two compatible. That other lesson taught her to believe that she ought to be true to her word;—that she especially ought to be true to one what had ever been specially true to her."

It is only the Solicitor-General—like Trollope a conservative



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liberal—who sees both sides of the case, arguing first against the folly of letting the girl throw herself away on the tailor and later against excessive severity, once it is clear she has made up her mind. The Countess is, undoubtedly, a harsh mother whose obstinate pride has made matters worse, but the snake in this garden is not a mother's pride but a young man's stubborn individualism and contempt for social distinctions. His neglect of parental rights is a sign of his deeper desire to overturn society. One can only hope, for the girl's sake, that he has not adopted the Jacobin view of marriage as a temporary convenience.

The marriage ceremony devised by the Jacobins was something less solemn than "Gentlemen, start your engines," and the Hebertiste procurator of Paris designed a pretty little divorce ceremony in which he congratulated the couple on their decision to start a new life. The pendulum has swung back and forth several times in 200 years, but the leftward forth is always further than the rightward back. By the 1970's, it was being argued that marriage is fundamentally incompatible with modern life. However, the leftists who used to make the case for open marriage, "swinging," group sex, child molesting, and incest, soon discovered that even if ordinary people do not honor marriage in fact, they cling to the superstitions of monogamy even as they are concealing their affairs or explaining a divorce to their children.

The superstition of marriage is more than sentimentality. What distinguishes us from our admirable first cousins, the gorillas and chimpanzees, is the human race's preference for a stable household and a statistical tendency toward monogamy. George Gilder's notion (borrowed from Lionel Tiger) that women, in forcing men to quit their jackrabbit ways and settle down to a k-strategy of propagation, created civilization, is pure bosh. To the extent we are men we are family men, and the species might better have been named *Homo familias*.

Of course, the survival of our race depends not on good judgment but on appetites. In primitive circumstances it is difficult to get enough protein and fat in the diet, hence modern man's excessive consumption of steak, and if sex were not the other greatest pleasure, our species would have died out a long time ago. By way of insurance man has a greater sex drive than he needs, and the more virile and ambitious he is, the greater his appetite for women, hence Edward O. Wilson's description of man as slightly polygenous. True civilization, so far from being inconsistent with human nature, is man's fulfillment. If primitive men protect their body with skins and extend the use of their hands with chipping tools and throwing sticks, civilized men wear togas or three-piece suits; they design crossbows, chisels, and split bamboo flyrods. In this sense, culture is hypertrophic in exaggerating our natural tendencies. If sex roles are only sketchily defined among hunter-gatherers, great civilizations are all patriarchal and do everything they can to emphasize and celebrate the differences between the sexes.

The problem comes when civilizations succeed in producing a leisure class with excess wealth. Under these conditions, men start acting as if they had read Lionel Tiger. No longer content with a fling or two, successful men begin to find ways of getting around marriage. They consort with prostitutes and take concubines, but that is not enough. We are all, so far as we are human, marrying men, and if we cannot get what we want in the arms of one wife, we can always look for another and another and another until we exhaust our resources—and our energies. In the late days of the republic, the Roman upper class went through a marriage crisis that we do not find remarkable today, simply because it seems to mirror our own.

Divorce revolutions typically strike the very rich, because only the rich can afford to waste their time on amours. There is no evidence to suggest that the Roman elite's immoralism spread to the other classes, even to the provincial squirearchy that was the backbone of the empire. But the great genius of democratic capitalism is that it brings upper-class degeneracy within the reach of every man, woman, and child. The role of democracy is fairly straightforward, since modern democracies refuse to tolerate distinctions of any kind—of class, sex, region, religion, race. The political engine of democracy is always envy and resentment against anyone who happens to possess a peculiar advantage that cannot be justified by a universal rule. If rich women can afford to pay a doctor to kill their unborn babies, then poor women should be given the same opportunity to kill theirs. If Nelson Rockefeller can die embracing two prostitutes, why cannot I, at least, have access to the Playboy Channel?

The role of capitalism is somewhat more complicated.* Marx and Engels recognized the symptoms: "They have dissolved every bond between man and man and replaced it with the cash nexus." Capitalism is a powerful energy; it thrives on growth and must expand or die. That, in a nutshell, is the philosophy of the *Wall Street Journal*. The most benign form of expansion is imperialism. Japan had to be chivied open by my wife's ancestor to create markets for American business, and in the 1950's Dwight Eisenhower declared that American business interests dictated an expanding military role in Southeast Asia.

Those business interests ended up costing American taxpayers a sum of money that is a substantial part of our national debt, and they levied a blood tribute on the young men of my own generation, just as they had levied even greater tributes upon my father's and grandfather's generations. Robert McNamara probably regards the Vietnam War, which spelled the collapse of the American political system, as a small price to pay for affluence. The really serious victims of democratic capitalism are internal, for as much energy as goes into international expansion, there is enough left over to devour all the moral habits and social institutions that are the capital reserves inherited from a precapitalist world.

Capitalism has to make money, and if capitalists cannot sell refrigerators to Eskimos, they have to find ways of turning noneconomic activities into commercial transactions. Once upon a time our ancestors knew how to entertain themselves: they told stories, played musical instruments, and read, over and over, the few books they owned or could borrow. Boys played rude games, and when they grew up they hunted and fished with gear they might have inherited. Not much profit in any of that, but with a little social restructuring we were persuaded that it was better to listen to phonograph records than to play the piano, to watch the Super Bowl than to play softball. The publishing industry could hardly get rich putting out a few good books a year or republishing the classics; a whole

*I am not criticizing the free market, or even big business, but a political-economic system in which the great economic interests are able to buy governments and use them both to further their own interests and to invade the private and social spheres of everyday life.*



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market of bestsellers had to be created—fast literature to be consumed along with fast food. Even hunting and fishing have been almost completely commercialized. The sign you see in tackle shops says it all: "He who dies with the most toys wins."

Well, even I am not immune to the thrill of a well-made rod or the allure of a new rifle. The earliest men worked hard on their spears, and the division of labor and specialized craftsmanship are only additional examples of cultural hypertrophy, but capitalism was not content with commercializing our recreations. A great sphere of human life lies outside the market: the household, within which relationships are defined by love and friendship rather than by price or cost. Capitalism's greatest triumph was learning how to buy and sell love.

On the surface, the idea seems preposterous. A family is not a random set of individuals brought together for some common purpose. The persons in a family are members, limbs of an organism; they are bone of each other's bone, flesh of each other's flesh. Modern Christians stick at the mystery of the Trinity, but the relationship of parents and children is precisely that of different persons with one substance. The law of the marketplace is competition, but the family's law is love, and even if my wife be neither beautiful nor pleasant, she is my wife, and my children, though they be stupid and lazy, remain mine forever. One cannot properly buy and sell within the family, any more than one can engage in commercial transactions with one's self.

As a consequence, the family and the household are impregnable bastions of precapitalist society against a capitalist world. Such is or was the ideal down to the Victorian era; in practice, the family has been capitalized and commercialized. To get its fingers into the organic unity of the household, democratic capitalism had to find the seams and cracks; it used the principle of equality as a crowbar to pry wives away from husbands, children from parents—it was called liberating individuals from the tyranny of patriarchy; and it learned how to divide and subdivide the family into economic functions of production and consumption, which were increasingly brokered out to external providers. Food, which was once grown, preserved, and cooked within the family, is now at best reheated; children are turned over to daycare, kindergartens, schools, and counselors; entertainment now means the consumption of commercially prepared experiences and even the ordinary pleasures of games and conversation is turned over to the Little League, the YMCA, and "after-school activities."

But capitalism's greatest triumph has been its successful attempt to replace the Christian concept of marriage as a mystical union of male and female into one flesh with a model based on the limited partnership. Marriage, we are told, fulfills certain needs and functions—sex, companionship, childrearing—and the durability of a marriage depends on the degree of success it has in carrying out the functions. Another species might construct a workable arrangement on this utilitarian basis, but mankind was not so created. Within a marriage we cannot split off erotic desire from companionship or parenthood without doing violence to all three marital qualities. Indeed, it is something of a strain for young men to form innocent friendships with women, because there is always, lurking in the background, another possibility. This is what harmless flirting was all about in the old days, a formalized method of mock-courting designed to prevent things from getting out of hand.

In dividing sex from marriage, capitalism has created a commodity that can be bought and sold. Of course most developed societies sell women's favors, but the very existence of prostitution serves to define what marriage is and is not. Burke observed, during the American Revolution, that slaveowners have the keenest sense of liberty; similarly, the matron is very much aware that her social status is the very opposite of the prostitute.

In singling out sex as an attribute of marriage (and of male-female relations generally) capitalism blurs the distinction between married love and sex-for-sale. Tomorrow, for example, is Valentine's Day, once upon a time a quasi-Christian holiday honoring tender and honorable affection, but now a celebration of lust. NBC will parade the *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit models; husbands are told to buy their wives red teddies from Frederick's of Hollywood; and the local newspapers are running features on romantic getaways for couples—cozy lodges with jacuzzis, vibrating beds, and mirrored ceilings. With any luck, Valentine's Day will turn into an erotic Christmas, marketing everything from a kiss on the cheek to bestialist peep shows, because whatever can be turned into money is the equivalent of everything else that can be turned into money, and the moral result is the perverse banality that "finds a wealth in division, / Some kinds of love are mistaken for vision. La te ta ta ta."

In late-capitalist America, women are marketed like meat—graded on scales of one to ten, advertised with glossy photographs, videos, and computerized sex bulletin boards, where it is possible for the geekiest Kuwaiti undergraduate to claim his First Amendment right to simulate the rape and murder of a fellow student. Even decent girls are aware that most men, by the time they reach twenty, have poisoned their imaginations on hundreds of hours of explicit pornography, and in nice suburban schools, girls are groped and fondled as they walk through the halls. They are taught, before they reach puberty, that when they go out on a date, they are expected to show their appreciation. Not so long ago fast girls kissed on the first date; today, they are expected to display a detailed and practical knowledge of the Kama Sutra (more multicultural richness).

It has been some time since young men came to the door and spoke politely to the parents. Today a complete stranger to the family drives up, the stereo booming, and honks the horn, and somebody's daughter disappears into the darkness. Even in better times girls go astray, no matter how strict their fathers. Today, even if girls have a father in the home, he will try hard not to be judgmental. He remembers what he did when he was young, and while an earlier generation of rakes, knowing themselves, used to send their daughters to convent schools, few men are willing to accept the responsibilities of fatherhood. It took only two generations and two world wars for the degeneracy of the Edwardian upper class to devour the bourgeois proprieties of Edward's mother and to reduce the status of all women to the level of prostitutes and prey. To win elections, we gave them the right to vote; to enhance profits and lower wages, we sent them out to work; to ensure a steady flow of sex without commitment, we staged the sexual revolution; we abandoned all the responsibilities of manhood and took to reading fashion magazines and talking about our feelings; and then we wonder why some women have learned to prefer other women, and we have the nerve to ask what women want. What in the name of Hell do men want?



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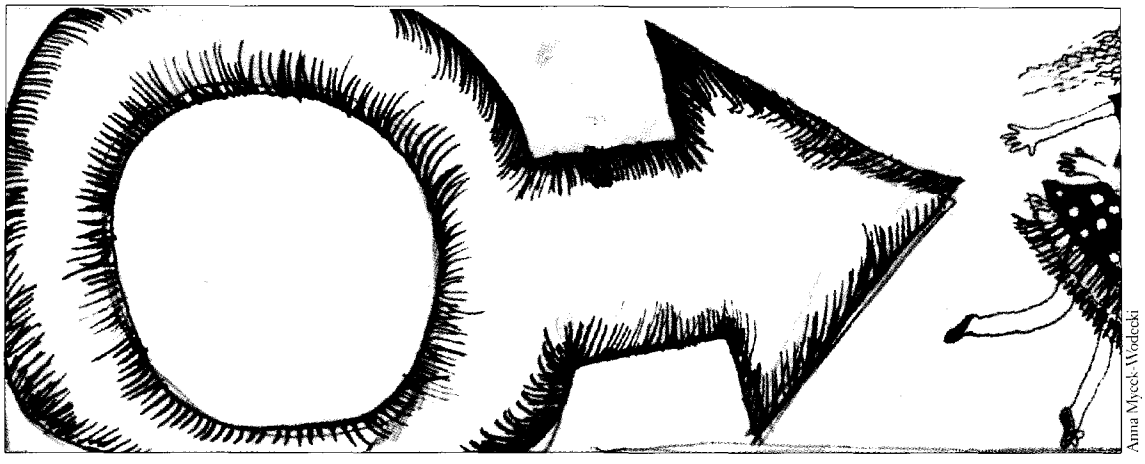
# The Fading of Feminism

by George Watson




Writing her column the other day in a London newspaper, a feminist confessed that the women's movement that started some 25 years ago had "spluttered to a halt." Many a middle-aged feminist nowadays will tell you the same thing. The young, they will say with an air of regret, meaning their daughters and the friends of their daughters, are not interested any more. Times have changed.

It occurs to me that the young may have a point. What, after all, did post-1968 feminism actually achieve? Self-possession, we are told by the same journalist; the knowledge that "our bodies are our own"; and professional careers. But the notion that women only started to resent harassment or rape as recently as 1968 looks implausible, on the face of it, and though there are no reliable statistics, no one is suggesting there is less of either. If feminism had succeeded, you would surely expect less, so it is wholly unclear what was achieved here. As for the higher professions, the number of career women was mounting sharply in the late 1950's and early 1960's, before feminism was reborn. Germaine Greer became a lecturer in a British university in 1967, three years before *The Female Eunuch* appeared, and she is not known to have been a feminist in her student days in Cambridge in the early 60's, though she already had an academic career in mind.

Causes, as everyone knows, do not follow their effects, and the evidence suggests that feminism did not send women off to get jobs, or better jobs: it is more likely to have been the other way around. The rhetoric of 1968 and since merely described a change of mood that had already occurred; soon after the war more and more women chose, as individuals and for no ideological reason, to enter politics, management, academia, medicine, and the law. They were not liberated, in those days, just free. The reasons are clear. Smaller families meant that the commanding role of motherhood ended sooner; increasing longevity posed the threat of half a century, perhaps, of aimless existence after children had reached maturity; and household machines meant more and more time on your hands. The greatest impulse towards professional life was and is a fear of boredom. All that was happening well before 1968. Margaret Thatcher entered the British House of Commons in 1959; Shirley Williams, who has been teaching at Harvard in recent years and is now an active member of the House of Lords, went into the Commons only five years after her, having been a secretary of the Fabian Society in the 1950's. Neither was or is a feminist. So it is not in doubt that there were ambitious and successful women inside the higher professions, and in growing numbers, before 1968.

Self-possession and professional careers are both admirable, and it is beyond question that there are more career women about than in 1945. But are women more self-possessed? Cast your mind back, if you can, to the 20-odd years between the end of the Second World War and the crisis year of 1968. I recall two notable female types from that distant epoch, both now mercifully extinct. The first, who may be called the Lady, habitually wore hat and gloves outdoors and issued orders to everyone, including her husband, sometimes in a stentorian voice. You did not contradict her. The other, whom I shall call the Woman, was all too often your landlady, and she screamed abuse in a way you resented but did not dare return. There was no question about their self-possession, which was total, or about who owned their bodies. In fact, the thought of harassment or rape never came into it.

As a fully committed neutral in the war between the sexes, if there is one, and as one now in his 60's, I do not regret the disappearance of either the Lady or the Woman. In my youth, I was afraid of both of them, though afraid of no man, and that is just the point. I cannot be alone among men in thinking women so far less formidable nowadays than they used to be. They have stopped shouting and they have stopped giving orders. If feminism has raised the status and authority of women, as it claims, there is precious little evidence for it—quite the contrary. And it is easy to see why. Once you enter a professional hierarchy, after all, or seek to enter one, you are whol-

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ly dependent (as the Lady and the Woman never were) on the good opinion of others. That is true even if you are at the top of a hierarchy, as a British prime minister discovered to her bitter cost in November 1990, when her own party (mostly men) threw her out, and as a French prime minister, Edith Cresson, discovered in a similar way a year or two later. The sober truth is that you do not cease to be subject to the will of others by becoming chairman, managing director, or even head of government. Nobody needs cooperation more than the chairman of a committee or a top manager, and the Lady and the Woman would not survive a week in such positions unless they muted their style and softened their manners. No wonder women have ceased to be formidable; no wonder they are nice to you. They need your support, your cooperation, your vote, and they know it.

In the face of the visible and audible decline in the status of her sex, the feminist has only one place left to look and sound self-possessed. That is the academy. There, in the humanities at least, simple and unsupported assertion is something you can still get away with, apparently, and every month brings new academic treatises on the triumph of the sex. They are widely reviewed, the bookstores are stacked with them, they may even be read. Meanwhile David Mamet's striking play *Oleanna*, which is having a long and well-deserved run in London, is terrifying audiences with a stark and simple tale of an ignorant and malignant student who defeats her well-meaning professor by threatening to bring a false charge of sexual harassment against him—a charge that can only destroy his career and his happiness. The play ends with his submission, and its resounding word is *power*. David Mamet is not a feminist; so it is not only feminists who think that women have triumphed in a battle of the sexes that some of us had not even noticed was happening.

The academic mood, in short, is triumphalist, and in *Fire with Fire* (1993), Naomi Wolf argues that we have witnessed nothing less than a "genderquake," with women now so powerful, as an effect of the women's movement, that it is time they woke up and noticed it, stopped moaning, threw restraint to the winds, and enjoyed the fruits of their triumph. There are international conferences, meanwhile, where the rhetoric of the 60's is paraded as the most exciting thing going and (what is even stranger) the latest thing going. "Feminist theory is the most innovative and truly living theory in today's academies," Teresa Brennan announces in the preface to *History after Lacan* (1993), which is composed, as such things are, in a soporific prose that looks as if it was imperfectly translated out of academic German around the turn of the last century; the book is allegedly based on the theories of a Parisian Freudian who died as an octogenarian in 1981 and whose chief researches were conducted between the two world wars. So assertion can do a lot, if you let it. It can find theory exciting, it can turn mutton into lamb.

It is tempting to suppose all this to be sincere, in a narcissistic sort of way, and to imagine that those who attend conferences on feminist theory, whatever other people may think, are genuinely excited by this sort of thing. I have been watching such conferences now for nearly 20 years and can report the surprising conclusion that this is not so. Feminists, too, are bored by feminist theory. You can see it in their faces, you can watch it in their rush to get to the door, you can judge it by their disinclination to listen to one another, and you can read it in their reviews. There is nothing exciting about these books—merely an unsupported claim by the author that she is about to do something exciting. And how, one wonders, would she know? The claim is about as plausible as a claim to be virtuous or a claim to be beautiful.

The world beyond academia, in any case, has long since moved in another direction, and 1968 feminism, which was always middle-class, is now middle-aged too. We are watching the fading of feminism, or failing to watch it, and there are some intelligent young women enjoying the spectacle. "I'm not falling into the feminist trap," a young wife remarked to me the other day, insisting it was high time her husband got a job; she had no intention, she said, of going on teaching to raise the rent, and greatly preferred the company of her own children to those of other people. As a male, I find all this faintly disquieting. The past quarter-century has been a good time to be a man, perhaps the best time there has ever been. If men in large numbers are prosperous as never before, it is women who are to be thanked for it. They account, after all, for nearly half the labor force of the Western industrial world, and the very high standard of living now enjoyed by men squarely depends on women going out to work. They are not an optional extra to the present economic order; and men would suffer, and suffer dramatically, if women downed tools. There is an issue of justice here, in any case, which oddly enough is little heard: that if women take from the economy, as indeed they do, then they should (generally speaking) contribute to it, too.

The other reasons for regret are social. I continue to hold doors open for women, when I think of it—partly out of force of habit, partly out of a recognition that most of them are unlikely to resent it since most of them are not feminists and never were. I find they do not object in either event. On the other hand, women are far more likely to pay for themselves in restaurants than they used to be, and if they insist I usually let them. And if men are better cooks than women, as some are, and enjoy it more, as some do, then it can only be good if men are spending more time in the kitchen. All this is wonderful news for chaps. There are even more intimate services, it is rumored, which once called for some expenditure by the male, one way or another and in or out of marriage—services now available, it is said, for nothing. Let it never be forgotten that if no means no, yes means yes. To sum up, this has been a hell of an age for men; and a lot of young women, brighter than their mums, have noticed it.

The consequences could be damaging. The largest achievement of feminism, apart from giving people something to talk about, and one that now looks clearer as the dust lifts from a free market, postsocialist age, was to act as a conveyor belt to carry a lot of intellectuals out of a hatred of private wealth and into a frank admission that rich is what in their heart of hearts they always wanted to be. Feminism, in its heyday, was licensed greed. It did not kill socialism, which was already dying of itself. But it made its demise easier to bear; it eased a transition. Now that the curtain is coming down on yet another interesting fad of modern intellectual history, the spectacle can be judged for the first time as a completed whole. It is rather like watching the end of surrealism, the death of communism, or the collapse of a messianic cult. Presumably there is nothing to be done about it. But as the waiter tenders the check, and I pay it, perhaps I may be allowed a sigh of regret for a world once loved that is lost.



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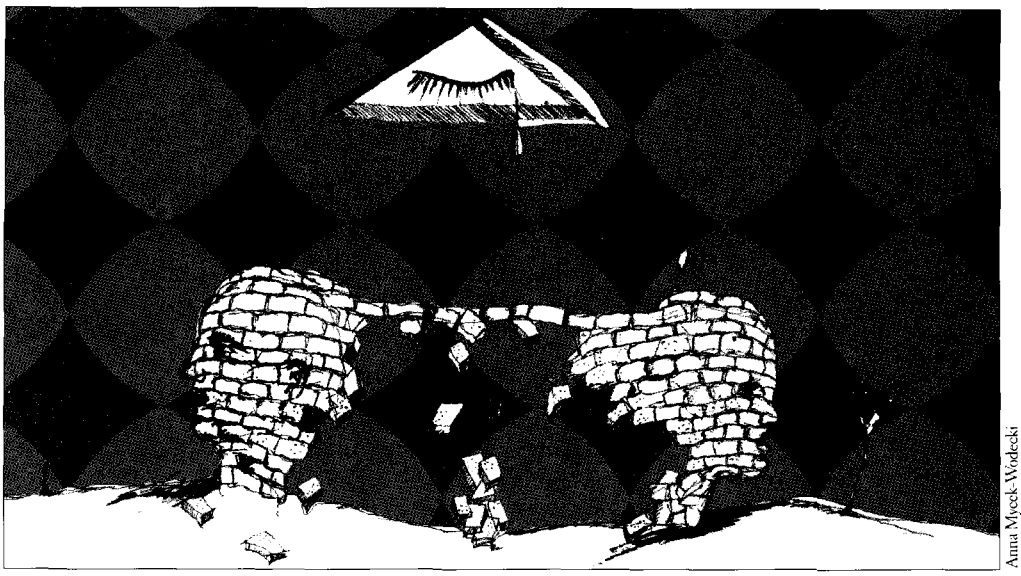
# Sexual Harassment and the Academy

by Clay Reynolds



Anna Myeck-Wodecki

*SCENE: Administrative conference room at a major university. Five grim-faced faculty members sit around a long table and stare at THE ACCUSED, who sits at one end, apart and alone. He is well dressed, young middle-aged, nice looking but not particularly handsome. Each member of the COMMITTEE has in front of him or her a thick sheaf of papers, which they all consult from time to time. Just to the side, a woman sits apart from the committee. She is the FEDERAL AFFIRMATIVE ACTION OFFICER. At the head of the table, the PROVOST studies his papers briefly, then begins to speak. PROVOST (rises; to everyone): "This hearing is to inquire into allegations stemming from specific complaints against a faculty member of this university. Everyone is advised that the proceedings are to be conducted in a fair and professional manner." (He sits, opens a file folder, reads briefly, and then says to the ACCUSED) "So, Professor Bookbinder, when, precisely, did you start harassing women?"*

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As farcical as the above opening may appear, it is a drama that is being played out with increasing frequency across university and college campuses and even in some public school board rooms throughout the United States. For a while, such Star Chamber inquiries were held in secret (the preferred term is "in confidence"), but now their results are appearing in daily newspapers and professional tabloids.

For a time, such inquiries concerned isolated accusations of impropriety on the part of a male faculty member or administrator by female students or workers. Now, however, they seem to be coming in bunches. At one university in Texas, for example, four faculty members, including a former department head, stand accused of displaying "gender bias," one of the several euphemisms being used by administrators to avoid the word "sex." At another school, two faculty members have been denied tenure, they assert, on the basis of the hint of complaints of sexual harassment circulated among administrators by "secret memo." At yet another school in the Southwest, the rumor is that as many as 16 faculty in the past three years have been forced to resign quietly or face charges of sexual harassment.

One department head in Alabama confidentially asserts that nationwide as many as a thousand faculty members were forced to resign or were denied tenure in 1992 when even the threat of sexual harassment complaints arose. He himself claims that he left his previous position at a major state university because he was told he "had a year to find another job," or else he would also be targeted for similar complaints.

An attorney in Dallas, Texas, says that he has recently or is currently representing more than 30 professors, instructors, and secondary school teachers, all of whom have been accused of sexual harassment or sexually biased discrimination. His advice to all of them is "cut the best deal you can and resign," although most of them prefer to fight what they see as nothing more than legal blackmail.

To the general public and most academics, this seems to be proper. These men have, in the parlance of our time, "hit on" women who were subordinate to them. They either threatened them with punishment if the women were not compliant or made an outright offer of better grades or job advancement in exchange for sexual favors. Or, at least, they have been accused of having done one or all of these things. If they are guilty, they should be severely punished, for women should be able to work or study without the threat of randy wolves prowling the hallways in search of vulnerable sex partners. Almost no one in the academy believes otherwise. Sexual harassment is a despicable form of intimidation that should, when it occurs, be stopped swiftly.

If that was what was going on in most of these cases, there would be no real problem. Women who have been victimized in this way could come forward, file their complaints, give proof of the damages done to them, and the guilty would be confronted, judged, and punished. Unfortunately, that is

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not happening in many—possibly more than many—instances. Instead, something far more dangerous is afoot.

In almost all the cases receiving media publicity—and many that are not—the women bringing the complaints are invoking a clause in their schools' sexual harassment policy that has to do with the work (or study) place. If, in a woman's opinion, a male superior's behavior creates a "threatening environment" or makes her uncomfortable in any way, then she is able—indeed she is encouraged—to come forward with a complaint.

No proof is required. No witnesses are required. No blatant physical or even verbal abuse needs to have occurred. Indeed, all a woman has to do is to assert that she has developed an *impression* that her superior has sexual designs on her or even that his presence makes her uncomfortable. She might even have encouraged him, might, indeed, have been the originator of a flirtation or a solicitor of his attention. That does not matter. All that matters is that she is not happy with those attentions—real or imagined—when they are directed toward her.

Certainly, there are serious complaints. Overt propositions, requests for sexual favors, repeated badgering for dates or assignations, inappropriate comments on a woman's sexuality all constitute clear violations of propriety if not a school's stated policy. But at least some charges are, in the main, frivolous. In one instance, a woman complained that a professor "wiggled his eyebrows" at her in a suggestive way; in another, a woman claimed that a professor held a door open for her and let her pass by him so he could sneak a peek down the arm-hole of her sweater; in another, a computer operator said her superior tended to pull his chair too close to hers when he needed to read what was on her screen.

Silly as these complaints may sound, they are taken very seriously by the Office of Equal Opportunity, and they are sufficient cause for university officials to launch a full and sometimes secret investigation of a professor's or administrator's background, to interview potential witnesses, indeed to ruin the career of any academic if he has ever, at any time, made any untoward gesture or comment toward a female at the school. Instances can range back for years; there is no statute of limitations on a careless comment or thoughtless gesture, an off-color joke, or the reading aloud of published material, even great literature containing potentially offensive language.

Here is a list of several cases either pending or of recent vintage:

—An adult, married female student writes in a diary erotic fantasies about one of her professors. She and her husband separate shortly afterwards. The husband finds the diary and threatens to bring charges and/or a lawsuit against the *professor*, who has no personal relationship with the woman at all, unless the university acts against him.

—A woman approaches a university attorney about a professor she says has "bothered" her. The attorney advises her to wear a "wire" or carry a tape recorder to gather evidence. She enters the professor's office and blatantly propositions him, even describes specific sexual acts she is willing to perform for him. He agrees and is lured into suggesting a time and place. He is later confronted with the tape, *minus* her proposition and suggestions, which have been erased, and invited to resign or face charges.

—An unmarried assistant professor invites a *former* and also unmarried student on a between-semesters date to a nearby town. On their return, he blatantly propositions her, but he does not connect the proposition to any school function or activity; nor does he attempt to coerce her on the grounds that he, as a member of the university faculty, might do her harm. She refuses, and he takes her home; she files a complaint against him. He is reprimanded by his department for sexual harassment, even though the incident occurred on personal time, away from campus, between semesters, and between adults. The following fall he is advised not to put himself forward for tenure but to "start looking for another job." He is terminated in the spring.

—A professor is asked for a ride home by a student he has known since childhood. On the way, she explains that her husband is gone and invites him, in what he infers is a suggestive tone, to come inside for a drink. He immediately pulls over into a convenience store parking lot, calls her a taxi from a pay telephone, and stands in clear view of the counter attendant until the cab arrives. She files charges against him the next morning for "humiliating and sexually harassing" her.

—A female student who has consistently bragged of her "former life" as a professional prostitute and of several present "lovers" approaches a professor from whom she has never had a class. She overtly propositions him; he accepts and follows her to her apartment. She files sexual harassment charges against him the next day. He is told to face charges, although his accuser is not named, or to resign.

—A male instructor fails a male student who has, in front of witnesses, made a provocative homosexual suggestion to him in a restaurant away from campus. The instructor rejects the advance, and when the final grades are posted, the student files a sexual harassment complaint. The instructor is suspended for two semesters "pending an investigation."

Apart from these, there are dozens, maybe hundreds of cases, where complaints are based on far *less* obvious evidence. In some cases, students have stated merely that they "felt" a professor's "eyes on them" either during class or elsewhere.

One might argue—and most university officials do—that there is a system, a process in place for the investigation of all such complaints. It is generally established by faculty handbooks to deal with matters of professional misbehavior. But these systems were designed to handle cases where hard evidence could be produced, not situations where inference, innuendo, and even intuition and hearsay become admissible evidence. The basis of most complaints is subjective in the extreme, and since an alleged action or statement may have taken place in private, it comes down most often to the word of the accuser against the word of the accused.

Most departmental or college committees are ill-equipped to function as judiciary bodies, are often ignorant of the "rules of evidence" such as might function in a legal court, rules that do not apply in university procedures anyway. They are rarely trained in psychoanalysis, a vital tool necessary to determine whether a complainant's "fearful feelings" are the result of genuine threats and insinuations. Hence, the procedures become little more than rubber stamps for administrators who want the "problem" dealt with rapidly and quietly. The most expedient method is to get rid of the accused faculty member. After all, professors can be replaced more readily than federal grants, and liability suits filed by dissatisfied complainants can be ruinously expensive. But the administrative bureaucrats go



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through the motions, anyway. And matters are usually handled "by the book," even though the accused usually finds himself completely alone and without reliable advice.

Very few universities provide counsel or legal representation to an accused faculty member. It is more efficient to proceed from the point where the prima facie evidence is offered. It is a reductive process: the faculty member is male and claims he is innocent; the accuser is female and claims he is guilty; therefore, he is guilty. His options, if his university is beneficent, are equally simple: he can fight it through a lengthy and confused university process, where the "fix" is usually in, or he can resign and hope to find another position elsewhere.

A "fair hearing," relying on "due process" as it is normally understood, usually does not happen any more often than the accused is found totally innocent. The institution acts as investigator, prosecutor, judge, and jury. The only role missing in what would ordinarily be seen as a judicial process is that of defense attorney. There, the "defendant" is on his own, faced with the enormously unjust proposition of proving himself innocent in the face of presumed guilt.

In an effort to build a strong case, most university officials will interview virtually any woman who has had contact with the professor and inform her that it is not only her right but also her obligation to report any improper behavior on the part of a superior—any superior. Sometimes pressure is applied; in at least some cases, threats of recrimination have been implied unless "the truth" is forthcoming. In at least one case, a female graduate student was told that her "continued progress toward a degree" might well depend on her "veracity." (Ironically, she was cohabitating with the accused professor at the time, although university officials were unaware of this.)

When scrupulous inquisitors undertake their inquiries, they do not divulge the name of the accused, but only a complete idiot believes that the women being summoned for interview are in the dark about what is going on or who is on the hot seat. In one case, a departmental worker was on the phone soliciting witnesses against an accused professor even before he was aware that anyone had filed a complaint or before the investigation was officially underway. Her "enthusiasm" for gathering damning evidence soon reached the accused, which was the first he knew he was being investigated at all. Secrecy and confidentiality are rare commodities on any university campus, particularly when a sensational cause such as sexual harassment is involved.

Such investigations almost always turn up sufficient cause to proceed with a full inquiry. It is impossible for any faculty member to teach several thousand students over a period of years and not to offend somebody. It is particularly likely that complaints will be forthcoming when the accused is unpopular, politically controversial, or professionally threatening to his colleagues. It is not unheard of for a complainant to be amorously involved with a departmental rival of the accused, and it is not unusual for that rival to apply pressure on other women to come forward and file new and totally unexpected complaints along the way. They need not fear lying—perjury is not a crime within the university committee hearing—and they can change their stories at will if the accused proves elusive or too cunning in his responses.

Generally, the accused is not informed of who is being solicited for testimony or what might have been said. On the contrary, he is often warned to stay away from any woman he even suspects might speak against him. In some cases, he may be covertly given tidbits of what is being said against him, all designed to frighten him into a preemptive resignation. In one case, a faculty member was told secretly that if he did not resign forthwith, the university administration would "close ranks" against him and feed him to the press. "They'll paint you black," he was told. "Quit and save your family the embarrassment."

One might assume that if a faculty member is completely innocent, he should be able to prove that easily enough and to go back to his position, his name cleared, his reputation intact. But proof of innocence, antithetical as it is to the entire system of jurisprudence, is even harder in cases where the charges are based on inference and subjective perception. As another attorney put it, "It's not like murder, where you have to have a witness or a corpse or at least a weapon. It's not like robbery, where you have something that was stolen. The accused doesn't just have to prove he didn't do it, but he has to prove that he never *thought* about doing it, that he never looked at the accusing individual and thought, 'Hey, she's pretty.' God help him if he ever said that to anyone, even to his closest friend."

In reality, no matter how ridiculous and unfounded complaints may eventually be proved to be or how completely an individual may be cleared of any charges or wrongdoing, the faculty member is tainted. His classes will not make, his committee assignments will be restricted, his ability to function as a counselor or colleague has been impaired, and he will have to work under a cloud of suspicion that he somehow "beat the rap."

As some university officials have admitted (off the record, of course), in such matters as sexual harassment, established processes are totally inadequate. Like the Spanish Inquisition, they are designed to ferret out guilt and mete out punishment, not to seek truth. Once a departmental committee meets to hear a complaint, the word has probably already come down from the higher administration, and the verdict is *pro forma*. In a sense, whatever opportunities offered to the accused faculty member for defense are predicated on the fallacy of the complex question. There is no doubt that he must have done this—for he stands accused by *a student*. The student's record does not matter, nor do possible personal motives. The only meaningful question for the committee is what to do about "the problem in the department."

No appellate committee at the college, university, or system level is likely to overturn a departmental committee's ruling. After all, if the department head and attendant committees want the guy gone, if the higher administration wants him gone as well, why should they interfere? If they buck the system too hard, they might be targeted themselves. The only true recourse an innocent party has is to endure the drumhead justice of the university and to take them to a real court. But this is more difficult than it seems, and it is marvelously expensive, usually well beyond the reach of a typical faculty salary.

The complexities are numerous. It can take anywhere from several months to a year or more before the university procedures are exhausted and the faculty member is terminated or forced to resign. His suit, then, cannot be filed on the basis of whether or not he was guilty of sexual harassment; rather, he must attack on the basis that he was wrongfully dismissed. This can take another year or more to get to court, and even if he wins, appeals and filed motions can delay a final decision



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for as long as half a decade. The school does not mind waiting. It has bags of money to spend on defense and all the time in the world.

Another Dallas attorney points out that most schools would far rather risk a "wrongful dismissal" suit than "take a federal hit." The former could cost the school hundreds of thousands, but the latter could run into millions of dollars and create a "domino effect" that could continue for years. The faculty member, though, who is not teaching and is not drawing a salary because he has taken the matter into a public forum, probably is not employable. Further, about all he can hope to win from his suit is restitution of back pay and restoration to his former position, full in the knowledge that everyone on the campus knows he was guilty—after all, did the university not say so?—and that his colleagues and department head resent his presence. Only then can he sue for damages and attempt to prove his innocence.

In the meantime, legal bills mount up. One faculty member was looking at more than $25,000 by the end of his university committee hearings. Another $15,000 was required to file suit, and yet another $10,000 would be due when the case went to court. He might not recover these costs, even if he wins, not without filing a damages suit, which will require even more up-front money with even less likelihood of a return.

It is an incredible situation. In a way, it is as if a New Inquisition has risen, wherein only the suggestion of heresy is the occasion for a full *auto-da-fé*, wherein somebody has to be pilloried to maintain the stability of a corrupt system. Perhaps a more contemporary if not more fitting analogy would be found in the early 50's, when professors were called in and grilled about the political affiliations of their youth. Now, as then, comparatively sane, logical, and intellectual administrators find themselves fearfully responding to mass hysteria. America's universities saw the ruination of many careers and the almost complete destruction of academic freedom, all to protect schools from governmental or social reprisals if they stood their ground and exercised constitutionally mandated rights.

But this is no illustration of a philosophical question about due process and fundamental democratic rights or academic freedom. It is a dangerous mania that is sweeping through the nation's universities and creating a "climate of fear" that forces individuals to be so guarded in their associations, casual comments, and even formal lectures that they begin to suspect everyone around them of being spies, ready to do them in for the most innocent of remarks or gestures if they give offense on any grounds whatsoever. Every coed is a potential Mata Hari, every colleague a potential fink.

At this writing, cases are being prepared to fight against this unbridled abridgment of individual liberty and attack on academic freedom. But in the meantime, no one knows for sure how many hundreds—or even thousands—of highly qualified and capable faculty members have quietly resigned and faded off into the darkness to avoid public scandal and personal attacks by the very schools to which they had dedicated their careers. Victims of hysterical reactions or collegial jealousy or departmental politics, some of these people have given up 20 or 30 years of tenure because unlike even an accused thief or murderer, they were not permitted to face their accusers, were denied due process, and were forced to prove their innocence in the face of abstract and often totally subjective and unproven testimony.

Thus, the dramatic opening to this essay is not so incredible at all. It may well be a fairly accurate representation of a tragedy that is being played out on some university campus every week of every semester. One dean said that he was taking early retirement rather than face another case. He believed that universities in America were entering a "dark period," where their function, their value, indeed their very existence will be called into question by a society that already sees them as general wastes of time and money, filled with myopic, oversexed professors whose interests run far too much to the philosophical and away from the pragmatic, too much toward nubile young coeds and away from solid "family values."

The current situation involving sexual harassment cases seems to underscore the correctness of this bleak vision. But regardless of what status universities may enjoy in the future, the most tragic result of this drama may be its negative impact on women's advancement in the academy. The inevitable result of the probability of unfounded accusations resulting in the ruination of a career is that men will become suspicious of any female colleague who expresses friendliness or seeks close professional association. Male professors will eventually become fearful of so much as speaking to female students, let alone offering them counsel and advice on matters academic. If almost any comment or aside can be deliberately misconstrued as a *double entendre* and used as a basis for complaint, why risk speaking to any woman at all? Why not draw an invisible line between men and women in the academy and establish, if need be, a separate but equal policy that prevents all contact between the sexes?

For years, women have justifiably complained that the academy is a "man's bastion" and "old boy" network; if this trend toward unjust treatment for those merely accused of sexual harassment continues, if women can bring unfounded and unproved allegations without fear of reprisals if they are demonstrated to be false or brought only for personal gain, then the very forces that set out to protect women from unwanted sexual advances may be guilty of building higher and tighter walls between males and females in the university. Collegiality cannot possibly be achieved when one gender works and lives in fear of the other; the inevitable result will be an effective barrier to opportunities for female advancement.

On the other hand, women are not necessarily impervious to this "witch hunt" mentality. At least a handful of cases involve complaints by men against their female professors who "came on" to them. Likewise, there are currently cases involving homosexual and lesbian advances on students. We might recall that the Grand Inquisitor was wonderfully multicultural in his charges.

It may be time to stop and define precisely what is meant by sexual harassment, rather than leave it to abstract interpretation and subjective impression. There is no question that it exists, or that it is an evil in the work or study place. But while clear violations need to be reported and perpetrators punished, it should never have become a weapon to be used against those who are merely careless or unpopular or who have merely trod on the wrong toes in the course of building their careers. It may well be up to those who started the hysteria to stop it before a "backlash" occurs that defeats whatever purposes have been achieved by those who seek to protect women—and men—from unwanted sexual advances.



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# The Secret History of the Feminist Movement

by Peter Shaw

Anna Mycek-Wodecki

*The feminist movement, it has just been learned, was actually concocted by men. Specifically, a small group of planners meeting in 1962 set in motion the developments of the next 30 years concerning men and women. These men acted in a selfish spirit of personal aggrandizement. The heretofore secret minutes of their planning group are in the possession of a former Securitate (Romanian Secret Service) agent, code named Preposteroff, who penetrated the group at the behest of the KGB. Preposteroff would not permit us to examine the minutes, but we are assured that they are authentic. Accordingly, we have paid over to the said Preposteroff a fabulous sum of money in small bills. In exchange, he has supplied the following account which, he assures us, is scrupulously based on the documents.*

* * *

How those arrogant Yankee conspirators would have been astonished had they known that their little plot was both encouraged and kept track of by me—an apparent confederate of theirs who was actually a Major General in the Securitate! At each meeting of the planning group, I read aloud and then theatrically burned before their eyes the minutes of the previous meeting, which I had taken care to photograph (and later on to Xerox). But to proceed to my *histoire*.

The words I am about to set down will answer one of the great mysteries of the feminist movement: How can it be that after nearly 30 years of triumphs by feminism, the condition of women is unmistakably worse than it was before all the agitation commenced? BFM (Before the Feminist Movement), women were secure in their persons and treated with deference and delicacy; SFM (Since the Feminist Movement), they walk the streets and shopping centers of the nation in fear of being accosted or raped. BFM, sex led toward marriage; SFM, sex leads to venereal disease and even AIDS. BFM, women looked over suitors and chose the one they preferred; SFM, women agree that there is a shortage of suitable mates. BFM, most women lived in one or another degree of comfort provided by the wages of a man; SFM, a significant number of women live in or near poverty as single parents. Tobacco and alcohol usage has risen among women, and the diseases brought about by such substances have become more prevalent.

None of these outcomes can be explained without access to the minutes of the secret men's group that brought them about. Yet it has to be understood at the outset that the men involved did not mean women harm, even though they certainly did not wish them well and frankly planned to exploit them. These men were dissatisfied with the situation of men in 1960. Some of their complaints were age-old, some of recent vintage.

Men's lot had not always been to work: this condition was but a few thousand years old. In primitive societies, in addition to performing the domestic chores, women did all the planting, tilling, harvesting, and distributing of produce. Men hunted, fornicated, and went to war. In the course of the 1950's, men of the planning group's nominally privileged class had been obliged to add long commutes to their workdays. Forced to spend an increasing amount of time outside the household, they suffered a weakening of their domestic authority. At home each night, they were treated to an evening of entertainment via the new medium of television, where they were often mocked and humiliated in situation comedies.

The cultural analysis of the day said that women lorded it over men as wives and moms. A favorite metaphor described women in terms of the Black Widow spider, whose female snapped off and ingested the head of its partner following copulation. Women were sitting pretty. Men were being reduced to automata: creatures in gray flannel suits, denatured corporation men, organization men. Women, freed by modern appliances, supermarkets, and birth control, lived leisured existences of beauty parlors, theater matinees, book clubs, lunch in town, and shopping. What it came down to was that men worked all day while women were on vacation. The men paid off their mortgages and kept up their life insurance, then died of heart attacks, leaving everything to still youthful wives.

It was I, acting on standing KGB instructions to undermine the social and cultural bases of capitalist society, who outlined the plan adopted at the first meeting. Initially it was necessary to entertain superficially attractive proposals such as setting up weekday, in-city dormitories stocked with Asian prostitutes to

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*Peter Shaw's latest book is* Recovering American Literature *(Ivan R. Dee).*



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spare the men their commute and the evening frustrations of a household with children. If practicable, this would be fine, I remarked. "But since it is not," I went on, "let us begin by clarifying our problem in the starkest possible terms: it comes down to not getting enough sex and having to do too much of the work." At these electrifying words, many hands shot up. Yes, these were the problems, all agreed, and the solution lay in reasserting male dominance.

Patiently, I pointed out that in the modern world it was not possible to coerce women. They were naturally controlling, difficult to argue with. Nor was it practicable to appeal to their generosity or better nature. They knew a good thing when they saw one and were not about to surrender their current advantages. They would not so much as admit how well they were doing: if challenged they would represent themselves as long-suffering mothers, guardians of home and family values, and steadying influences on the naturally wayward male.

But here, it slowly emerged, was the very key we were looking for. We could turn women's stance of aggrieved self-righteousness to our purposes. Women complained that husbands were dull and otherwise inadequate; that they came home after work in a surly state; that they were unappreciative of their wives' accomplishments of the day, indifferent to new slipcovers, unaware of a new hairdo or a new dress. Very well, we concluded, our task is to employ the fulcrum of women's insistence that theirs is an unsatisfactory lot in such a way as to make *them* bring about the changes we desired.

This much agreed upon, the secret group adjourned. It met again the following year, 1963, on the spur of two new social developments both highly favorable to its agenda: the abortion pill and the civil rights movement. Taken together, these developments pointed to a master solution for *both* of the group's agenda items of sex and work.

The pill, more than previous forms of contraception, had the potential to set women free from sexual responsibility or even sexual restraint. The civil rights movement had been especially popular with upper-middle-class progressive women since the Supreme Court school desegregation decision of 1954. The same women just might be susceptible to the appeal of a liberation movement employing similar rhetoric in their own behalf. The trick would be to make it appear that the new movement was motivated not by self-interest but by concern for other women—women of lesser status trapped in lives of sexual unfulfillment. Never mind that lower-class women had higher promiscuity rates than the women who would speak on their behalf. Properly phrased, the new movement's demands could appear as efforts to liberate the less fortunate, while actually yielding a bounty of personal titillation and sexual adventure for women of privilege. Stage one of the plan—sexual "liberation"—was to be put into execution immediately.

Our success was stunning. A revolution of sexual liberation was launched, precisely in the terms anticipated. As was indicated by the revolution's popular book titles—*Sex and the Single Girl*, *The Sensuous Woman*—this was apparently a movement of, by, and for women. No suspicion of the role of the secret committee ever crossed anyone's mind. The result of the sexual revolution was to bring promiscuity into vogue among the previously hard-to-obtain women of the secret group's own class. Now one could go from one to another of them virtually at will, and be entertained like a Pasha by houris—and houris who had made themselves adept at physical contortions or at such sexual subtleties as the external use of Ready Whip (ironically enough, one of the very same prepared foods that in recent years had helped bring about an actual liberation for women from the time-consuming dreariness of cooking). Decidedly, the sexual revolution was a success—for men.

The third meeting of the secret group took place in 1967: it was time for the second stage of the master plan. The sex kittens were now to be redirected to relieving men of their burden of work. The plan once again called for women to take the lead—something that would be accomplished by elevating the idea of "career." All that this term had ever signified up to now was that men who worked in larger organizations could count on seniority raises as they went along. Professional men were sometimes said to have *distinguished careers*, but for the most part they had professional "practices," a word destined to disappear from the language thanks to the revolution the secret group now launched.

It was gradually insinuated into the minds of women that men did not drag themselves to work each day simply in order to pay the mortgage and put food on the table, but rather experienced the adventure of *career*. Onward and upward they moved through the progressive rewards and satisfactions of career. Women had been excluded from the professional world because men did not want to let them in on the adventure. Women would now demand the right to work—ignoring the obvious circumstance that most of their sisters would find themselves not on the executive ladder but in canning factories or on production lines.

A number of devices were employed to enhance the chimera of career. Recognizing that the same low-level office work that had long been necessary would continue to employ the most people, and that these workers would continue to be women, jobs like "secretary" were renamed with career titles like "executive assistant," "executive secretary," and "administrative assistant." Later on, the repetitive work performed at the secretarial level could be glamorized by association with evolving office technologies, so that typists became "word processors" and "computer coordinators."

Women who wanted work were often qualified only for low-prestige jobs like nursing and teaching. With nursing, keeping them in their place was accomplished first by applying new designations—"nursing practitioners" and "physician extenders"—and then by multiplying administrative titles, chores, and designations. Accordingly, the head nurse was replaced by the "clinical coordinator," "director of nursing," or "assistant vice-president in charge of nursing."

With women teachers, we were able to take advantage of a fortuitous development: the coincidental decline of educational levels that from the beginning of the women's movement up to the early 1990's resulted in bringing down the level of college instruction to a par with grammar school. This meant that women could be kept at the same level of teaching, but with the illusory prestige of being college instructors.

Women eventually came to dominate most of what are known as the "soft" subjects—English, sociology, anthropology, psychology. In addition, special divisions of "feminist studies" were set up, and college administrations were tripled in size to employ increasing numbers of women. In the meantime, men continued to conduct the serious business of the universities in physics, chemistry, biology.



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When it came to the major role of women in society—caring for children—the rising divorce rate brought on by the sexual revolution provided the opportunity to keep women employed. Many children now needed to be looked after in groups while their mothers worked. Who better to care for them than . . . women? It was necessary only to professionalize child care, to gild it with the ever-attractive patina of career. Not baby-sitting locations but Child Care Centers were brought into existence. The centers employed *trained personnel*. They were supervised by *daycare specialists*. All those employed in this work were on professional career tracks that would bring them up through directorships to positions in regional administrative offices for child care, onto activist legislative lobbying groups, and so on.

With the child care "profession," as with the others, women had been lured into either taking over work from men or continuing to shoulder their traditional burdens. In other words, our success was complete. Female employment rose to some 50 percent of the work force. Since women could get jobs, husbands could abandon wives and children in favor of new partners. These abandonments yielded for the male both sexual satisfaction and freedom from work to support two families. To be sure, without work experience single mothers earned substantially less than their husbands had, and began to sink toward poverty. But so deftly had the romance of career been implanted in the minds of the feminist leaders that instead of calling for men to resume supporting women, they demanded only better careers and higher wages. The secret committee now had women where it wanted them—at work and in sexual bondage.

Nor did it seem that things would be reversed. We knew that we could count on the upper-middle-suburbanite opinion class of women to keep things going. They earned salaries high enough to allow them both sexual freedom and Murphy Brown-like single motherhood. This class, organized as the feminist movement, could be counted on to continue manufacturing the litany of complaints that gave women the illusion of making demands and achieving victories even as they were being further and further immured in sexual exploitation, work, and child care. Furthermore, the emphasis on what the opinion class termed "patriarchy"—the power of men over women—rendered all women inferior by definition. Theirs had become a self-imposed, psychological second-class status quite the opposite from the commanding social position they had previously held.

This last development—the devolution of women's status—gave everyone in the group pause. We had not intended to bring about the denigration of women, but only to reduce their privileges. It seemed that in this and other respects, things had perhaps gone too far. And so yet another meeting was convened in 1991. As we assessed the situation, the condition of women, toward whom all had initially borne resentment, had grown bad enough to appeal to our by now atrophied instincts of chivalry. First, as Dan Quayle had observed, the apparently-so-desirable, sexually irresponsible behavior of privileged women, when it had spread to the lower classes, reduced their women to penury. So long as welfare alone was required to deal with this outcome, the secret group had been willing to pay the price. But now two unforeseen and undesirable developments considerably altered the situation.

First, the sexual irresponsibility that had spread downward had begun to flow back upward. The new, trickle-up morality affected the young in particular. Suddenly not just adult but child sexual promiscuity had become permissible, along with *child* single-parenthood on a scale extensive enough to bring to our own class a poverty heretofore restricted to the foolishly promiscuous among the lower classes. The secret committee had started by practicing on adult women; now the worst results of its manipulations were appearing in successive generations of young women and girls—among them the members' own daughters and granddaughters. Second, defeminization—the loss of femininity among women performing rough men's work—also began to spread upward. Privileged women were not being hardened by working as truckers or warehousemen, but even in offices and universities they were growing ever more shameless and vulgar.

Things had gone too far: the secret group had proven to be too clever by half. The entire experiment had to be reversed so as to bring the relationship between the sexes back to a workable equilibrium. Above all, women had to be granted their differences from men—their different sexuality, different relationship to children, different kinds of work they could do well. This meant ending both rampant sexual promiscuity and the cultural atmosphere that made women feel it was virtually mandatory for them to go to work.

Like women, men had not truly benefited from women's promiscuity and going to work. Where women had grown more sexually aggressive, male impotence often followed. Where men indulged in extramarital sex, their wives often responded by doing the same. The resultant rise in the divorce rate had cut many a man's equity in half, obliging him to work even harder than in the past in order to support two families. For, as it turned out, women *did* come around to demanding support after divorce, despite their claims of equality with men.

As for female employment lightening men's work burden, this had somehow not come about. In the first place, women did not really do men's work, as we have seen. More importantly, women treated their wages as discretionary income. Instead of producing time off from work for men, working women simply raised a family's standard of living. This benefited lower-income men, but made less difference for the well-heeled class to which the members of the secret committee belonged. Most disturbingly, a respectable researcher on heart disease found that "men with highly educated wives who work outside the home faced a greater risk of dying of a heart attack than did men with less educated wives." In short, giving up the changes set in motion by the committee in 1962 now promised to be more of a relief than a sacrifice.

Not surprisingly, a debate ensued on how to achieve the group's aims. One side again called for a reassertion of male authority. Cooler heads pointed out that this was no longer an option: all the fundamentals of male-female relationship had been altered. On the other hand, I pointed out, less had changed than might seem to be the case, so that there still existed many bases on which to work toward the desired turnaround. I was now as willing to help right the situation as I had initially been committed to weakening the social fabric. For I was no longer in the employ of either the KGB or the Securitate, nor had I been since the end of the Cold War. Indeed, I was an American, and as such I was just as worried as anyone else about the deterioration of the relationship between the sexes.



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I therefore went on to point out that marital infidelity, which according to pop sociologists has reached 50 percent, was actually at only 3 to 4 percent a year, and the total number of married people who had ever strayed was no higher than 15 percent, and not rising. Nor had female responses changed as much as advertised. "Women have needs of intimacy, home and family" admitted Betty Friedan in 1987. In 1986, a feminist wrote in the *New York Times* "Hers" column that she felt jealous over her nurturing husband's intimacy with their infant daughter. She put off weaning in order to keep him from feeding the baby and because continuing to nurse was for her "a physical want." She concluded that "women who do all the parenting . . . have a special power that I have relinquished. It is the power of being everything to a child."

Women had begun to realize that going to work was not all it had been cracked up to be. The gradual realization that they were in many respects worse off had spread even to the privileged women not obliged to undertake onerous work. For example, in 1993 "three quarters of female doctors surveyed in Canada said they had been sexually harassed by male patients," according to a study in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. The two women doctors who conducted the study showed that the so-called empowerment of women had not made them free. "The vulnerability inherent in their sex seems in many cases to override their power as doctors," they concluded. If women had started to refer to their inherent vulnerability, I pointed out, they were on the verge of change.

Such a change, furthermore, was already apparent, and was decidedly in the direction of traditional romance, marriage, and family. A key item was a 1989 report by Danielle Crittenden in the *Wall Street Journal*. She wrote that "the articles women's magazines are publishing today are little different from those that feminist authors such as Betty Friedan and Barbara Ehrenreich dug up in the back issues of the *Ladies' Home Journal* as evidence for their thesis that women in the 1950's were being indoctrinated into submissive domesticity." She concluded that "if women's magazines are in any way a barometer of a female zeitgeist, then women today are as neurotically insecure and preoccupied with getting married as feminist writers say they were three decades ago." After hearing this, the members agreed that a revolution was not called for so much as a gentle nudge to push the zeitgeist a bit faster in the direction it was already taking.

If anything, the danger lay in allowing word to get out that little had actually changed in the relationship between the sexes and that feminism had left women worse off. A recognition of either circumstance might well set off another round of sexual revolution and radical feminism. Far better to foster the current self-congratulatory mood of the feminists and to encourage them to continue presenting one another with awards.

At the same time, it would once again be necessary very delicately to encourage female complaining. Especially useful in this regard was the false history of women being perpetrated by the feminists in order to make themselves appear as benefactors. The secret group had cause for worry when Ruth Bader Ginsburg was appointed to the Supreme Court. Her curriculum vitae revealed a steady upward course starting back in the supposedly benighted 1950's. She went from Cornell to Harvard Law, made Law Review, transferred to Columbia Law, was awarded a prestigious Federal District Court clerkship, a professorship at Rutgers Law, and eventually a judgeship of her own on the Federal Circuit Court of Appeals.

Not only Ginsburg, but her female classmates at Columbia had advanced virtually as far as they wished. As the *Wall Street Journal* reported, "most of the women in the class ended up following career paths similar to the men—law firm partners, judges, academics, public-interest lawyers and in-house corporate attorneys." Luckily for the plans of the secret group, the women journalists who reported on these careers presented them as sagas of victimization. Each success was made to seem a triumph over sexist adversity, with the result that no one noticed that careers had always been possible for women who wanted them.

The slight nudge to the zeitgeist advocated at the 1992 meeting was duly administered, but I do not know if further meetings ever took place. My cover was blown when a group of dossiers on Romanian Securitate agents was sold by a former librarian at the KGB's Moscow archive. He filched them before departing, like myself, for the West. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to make out the influence of the committee in developments since 1992.

Quite unaware of the implications of what they were doing, the feminists reversed themselves on pornography. As usual, they railed against men. But in demanding special protection from sexual exploitation by men, they admitted their unique vulnerability as women. In 1963—that is, BFM—one of the first steps in destroying feminine modesty had been an arrangement by the committee to secure favorable reviews, some of them by women, in the *New York Review of Books* and other opinion-making journals, of the book *The Story of O*. This is a misogynistic fantasy in which rape and sexual degradation are employed to reduce women to humiliating sexual bondage. By the 1990's—SFM—women, including the feminists, were seeking relief from the very humiliations they had seen as sexual liberation in the 1960's. To me, the former Preposteroff, the hand of the committee was evident in the feminists' amnesia: they evidenced no inkling of their own movement's implication in the rise of pornography.

Next, once again in the feminist language of attacks on men, the feminist movement began to agitate for even more protections against male sexual and physical power. Sexual conduct codes were instituted at colleges. In offices, male sexual behavior and speech came under control to the point where so much as smiling at a woman could lead to charges. Here and there the observation was made that such codes depicted women in the stereotypes of the distant past. Indeed, they were being depicted not so much as they had been in the 1950's as how they had been during the Victorian era. But, again thanks to the committee, the feminists were able to ignore the implications of their own Victorianism.

If the committee ever met again after 1992, which is doubtful, it determined that no further interventions were necessary as of 1993 or 1994. The retreat from feminism was being satisfactorily conducted by the intellectually moribund but still activist feminist movement. Employing a distracting rhetoric of complaint and demand—both of which revived caricatures of female behavior supposed to have once been fostered by men—the movement was now dedicated to defining women as different and vulnerable, and to securing special protections for them. The committee could safely let the issue rest. Its members would have to reconvene to restore equilibrium only if the feminists went too far in making women out to be inferior.



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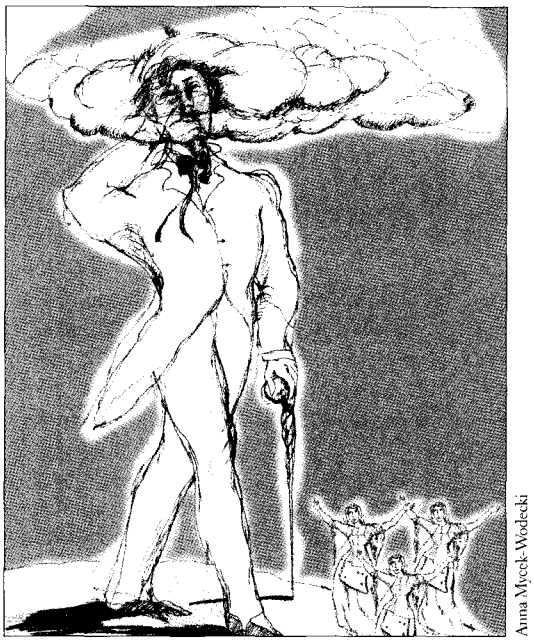
# Where Have the Women All Gone?

by Mark Racho



Anna Mycek-Wodecki

"The Queen is most anxious to enlist everyone to join in checking this mad, wicked folly of women's rights," wrote Queen Victoria in 1870 to Sir Theodore Martin. "Woman would become the most hateful, heartless and disgusting of human beings, were she allowed to unsex herself." Pausing only to add "fanatical" and "idiotic" to Her Majesty's adjectives, and with a century and a quarter's hindsight to my advantage, I can only admire the Queen's prescience. It is not that the fishwives and Madame Thenardiers have grown any fishier—for they were always bad enough—it is rather that the Cosettes and Di Vernons have disappeared. I do not say that women ought to be Victorian violets, or that every new freedom gained by the sex should be repealed, but it is sad to note how each advance seems to make women more unsatisfied, more spiteful, and more vulgar.

It is difficult to tell precisely when the corruption set in; a misogynist might reply sardonically "the Garden of Eden," but I love the ladies too well to join the crabby ranks of woman-haters through the ages, so my judgment must be more considered, though romantic, and I am forced to choose a time before I was born—the 1960's, "between the end of the Chatterley ban / and the Beatles' first L.P." Although not all women ran mad during the 60's, enough did to induct their daughters *en masse* into the cult of feminism; this, added to the revolting politics of the period, and its orgiastic carelessness and general degradation, broke ground for an age that was new but whose vices were old, an age whose roots could be found in the Rome of Elagabalus or the London of the Restoration. An even more violent outbreak of familiar "modernity" can be discerned in the early 1980's with the discovery of AIDS and our subsequent fixation on the medical and mechanical aspects of sex. Since then the "modern young woman" has taken much pride in speaking, acting, and clothing herself very much like a whore, while thinking like a puritan. Now there is no longer even the romantic pretense of the 60's; the free love, gentleness, and innocence that the imagination paints upon that decade have become the naked and unnatural aggression, selfishness, and viciousness personified by the "role model" worshiped in a thousand "women's studies" courses—the modern Messalina, Madonna Ciccone.

However, women being women, the newfangled young ladies are entirely naive when it comes to the actual relations between men and women—the vulgar loudmouth so proud of her equality and "empowerment" knows less about men than the shyest Dickens virgin, hence the prevalence of "date-rape" (i.e., being taken advantage of). These pitiful creatures so "secure in their sexuality" are nevertheless innocent of facts that their unenlightened grandmothers knew, namely that men are carnal. And as it was women who civilized men through the ages, their abdication of that role leaves men to run riot and act as abominably as ever they did. My father's solicitous behavior toward my mother taught me how decent women ought to be treated, but the old Adam in me, encountering so many girls ready to buy love and attention at the price of a one-night stand, could only marvel and prevail.

A fundamental tenet of the cult of feminism is that women must act with all the rudeness, contempt, and brutality that men sometimes exhibit toward women and toward each other; this is called "empowerment," and men are supposed to be frightened of a "powerful" woman. In fact, men find such women laughable. Because we have outgrown our fears of the frigid grade school teacher, we are not impressed by Hillary Rodham Clinton, we have only contemptuous chuckles for Madonna Ciccone because we have seen better bodies on cheaper whores, and our only reaction to the frozen smile on the (surgically improved?) face of Naomi Wolf as she fulminates about sexism is "cute babe . . . what did she say?" The modern Barbie-bitch responds to this by trying to outdo men,

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usually by making sardonic comments about the "boys," and—the lowest and cheapest shot—talking about our privy members. What a hypocrite. This is the same talking nail-file who can sniff "sexual harassment" at 50 paces, and for whom normal male behavior is deeply suspect. She dreams of date-rape so that she can have something to feel indignant about.

What is sad about the excesses and "openness" of the last few decades is that they have caused so many ordinary men to become either milksops or brutish thugs, and women to add the worst characteristics of the male to the female repertoire. As women friends have told me in secret, though men can be boorish and sometimes cruel, women exceed them in sheer refinement of viciousness, especially toward other women and the gentler and more old-fashioned type of man. Men generally make women cry through sins of omission and lumpish insensitivity, whereas women often do it through spite. To combine this female trait with an imitation of male power (however ineffectual) is to make for a pretty horrid sort of woman. Anyway, are women really more "powerful" today, as feminists claim? I think not—my older matriarchal women friends, who make me blanch and will probably call me boy when I'm in my 30's, think that feminism is balderdash and that young women are naive and whining hypocrites. And certainly any comparison of movies old and new favors Katharine Hepburn, Myrna Loy, Barbara Stanwyck, and the Rosalind Russell of *His Girl Friday* over the characterless morons and strippers who portray the modern woman.

Not that women are all to blame—after all, both sexes took part in the free-fall of the 1960's, and it was mostly men who voted to make irrationality into law in the various equal rights amendments of the following decade. As for the youth movements of the 60's, they were co-opted by the rich and luxurious senators and tribunes of the media, and these greasy Lucullus-es sold our unlicensed vulgarity back to us by the sackload. Any perusal of the magazines, newspapers, movies, and television programs of the last three decades shows our ever-increasing decadence. The intellectuals started it; Norman Mailer's obsession with the orgasm and John Updike's tedious couplings filtered into the glossy magazines, and soon obscenity and license were fashionable. It took a little longer for TV to join in; the point of no return seems to have been reached in the early 1980's—before it there were shows like *Donna Reed* and *Happy Days*, after it *Roseanne* and *Married with Children*. And it was the 80's that blessed us with Dr. Ruth, looking like Mengele's procuress, a shameless embarrassment who should have been locked in a nursing home to drool and befoul herself.

There is little left to hide now, what with advertisements for prophylactics and various forms of female itch cream with names like Clitroslimol competing for space on the airwaves. The lady in Swift's poem seems to be selling most of the contents of her dressing table on television; "Celia! Celia! Celia has a *yeast infection*!" Worse still is our sick obsession with gratuitous depictions of childbirth. Hardly a day goes by without a shameless actress spreading her legs and pretending to give birth, moans and all, on some made-for-TV movie.

Shamelessness is a badge that the fair sex wears with pride now; the very idea that behavior might be thought immodest is beyond the comprehension of most people under 40, and therefore few of the ordinary decencies are observed. Somehow humiliation and exhibitionism have become a mark of honor, of "liberation." In England, young girls glory in going topless in the pages of the *Sun*; in America, they queue up to appear on Howard Stern's radio show (Belinda Carlisle from the Go-Go's was recently on Stern—he paid her $150 to let him cut off her stockings and fondle her feet). Women rarely (other than for political reasons) upbraid men for being boorish and lewd, and often join in the worst kind of masculine vulgarity. Nevertheless, they enjoy a double standard that is scandalous; a woman may act as outrageously as she wishes without fear of reproach, but the slightest cross-eyed glance, the minutest male infraction, however trivial, is grounds for sending a man to the Star Chamber of "sexual harassment."

This double standard has grown so common that we have come to accept feminism as normal and to mouth pious platitudes when confronted with the absurd situations caused by the cult. Hundreds of millions of dollars are spent changing military materiel to make it unisex, carriers torn apart, aircraft ejection seats altered at great cost, and the result of this endeavor? After repeated warnings by real soldiers and fliers against the idiocy of putting women in combat, the first female combat pilot destroys herself and a $100 million plane while patrolling in the Pacific. Nice work. Women purporting to take male roles have never been held to the same standards as men, and the craziness at the all-male Citadel military academy in Virginia is another excellent example. Shannon Faulkner not only attempted to destroy its tradition (knowing there are a hundred military schools that take girlies), but having forced her way in with the aid of demented judges, refused to accept having her head shaved along with the male cadets. I have friends in the marines whose description of hazing makes me glad to be an effete writer; training soldiers is a tough, unfair, horrible, and often unbearable process. Those who survive are changed and hardened, and I think that no woman should be put through something so awful. But if little Miss Shannon really wants to be a soldier, let her be hazed with the rest; marines are probed and tormented to find their weak points—a woman's weak point is obvious, and young Shannon could be raped repeatedly to see what she is made of. This is a horrible thing to write, but feminist cultists must be shocked into common sense: What the hell do they think the enemy will do to her?

Unfortunately, this kind of toughness may yet come to pass—C.J. Cherryh's sci-fi novel *Rimrunners* describes just such a violated and hardened female space marine of the future, and a glance at *American Gladiators* and Cynthia Rothrock movies is enough to show that we are well on the way. I would not even mind that much, if there were still some gentle ladies left, but where are they? Today's young women are easily stereotyped, and hardly any of the stereotypes are attractive. It would be foolish of me to claim to know what women were really like before I was born, but a romantic comparison is possible, using the pure image of movies and television then and now. Then we had Deanna Durbin and Alice Faye, now we have Shannon Doherty and Sharon Stone. Then we had Audrey Hepburn and Hayley Mills, now we have the blubber-lipped Kim Basinger and Juliette Lewis. Then we had Audrey Meadows and Lucille Ball, now we have Roseanne Barr.

There have been changes even within my lifetime. The *Charlie's Angels* of my childhood were paragons of femininity compared to the dismal sluts one sees on TV today. And pop music? I remember Karen Carpenter, those darlings in Abba,



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the young Kate Bush, even Blondie, with nostalgia; I miss their sweet voices, charming melodies, and apparent innocence. Now there are no more tunes and the voices are turned to shrieks, and the absolute lack of any discernible musical talent is covered over with a thick mucous layer of MTV attitude. For this is the 90's; the great era of the female musician. She comes in three basic types: the fake, six-year-old, petulant, lisping Daddy's girl, skipping about and singing in an annoying whine; the Madwoman of Chaillot complete with loose gestures and rolling eyes, gurgling and howling like a Bulgarian widow; and finally the Woman Songwriter with long dresses and combat boots, often wearing glasses and singing in a self-involved monotone that belongs in a Soviet tank factory.

Which brings me finally to the female voice. Whatever happened to it? When I watch old movies or listen to old radio programs I am often struck by the loveliness of female tones, from the peachy bass flute of Margaret Dumont to the "lark ascending" of Deanna Durbin. For some reason, women can no longer speak beautifully. The older ones usually cultivate an angry flat delivery like a feminist drill sergeant, and the young girls croak like frogs. The ubiquitous croaking noise that issues from the throats of the young is an attempt to sound like a stoner, an habitual drug addict. I suppose the girls think it makes them sound sexy.

Oh, where have the women all gone? Was it only 40 years ago that Jerry Lewis got stuck in a girl's school in *You're Never Too Young*? I watched the movie the other night, and marveled at how innocent and honestly young those little actresses were, how soft of voice, how gentle and kind, and how various—short, plain, pretty, tall, plump, bossy, but all of them adorable. Watching their modern counterparts forms an invidious comparison, so many of them croaking, bitchy, simpering, nasty toughs obsessed with sexual politics. As they grow, they will mate with new men and breed snarling brats whose vocabulary consists of the word "cool." But where have the women all gone? Where can one find those wonderful creatures who used to be so . . . feminine?

I may not be the only young person asking such questions, however. The title of this article is taken from a poignant song by an effervescent New York folk duo named Drink Me:

Hey there reference librarians,
Hey rare book antiquarians,
Hey there octogenarians, answer please,
What will I do with these flowers and gems?
To whom will I recite these wretched poems?
How will I live in a world without them?
Where have the women all gone?


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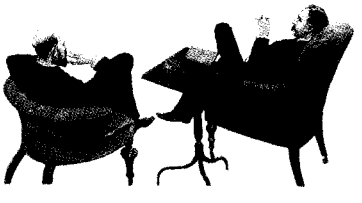

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# Higgledy Figaro: A Few Nights at the Opera

*by Katherine McAlpine*

Terrible parable:
Lucy di Lammermoor
must marry Arthur but
hungers for Ed.

After a murder, a
superspectacular
mad scene and suicide,
everyone's dead.

*

Whorily, florally,
Carmen the Gypsy Girl
coyly and craftily
toys with José.

He, driven wild by her
insensitivity,
finally stabs her, to
shouts of "*Olé*!"

*

Chauvinist-piggery!
Lieutenant Pinkerton
marries poor Butterfly,
dumps her, and flees.

Butterfly kills herself
coloraturically,
spilling her guts in a
glut of high C's.

*

Mumbledy-jumbledy—
Norma the Druidess,
breaking her vows for this
hot Roman guy,

prays and laments through some
incomprehensible
arias, after which
both of them fry.

*

Eerily, drearily,
*Fliegende Hollander*'s
doomed to keep sailing
around and around.

Then he meets Senta, whose
ultrafidelity
brings him redemption right
after she's drowned.

*

Awfully coughily,
Courtesan Valery,
loving Alfredo but
heeding his Pop,

drops him, convinced of her
unsuitability,
dies of consumption while
singing nonstop.

*

Lewdery/prudery:
Little Miss Salome
yearns for Jokannan, who
calls her ill-bred.

So she exhibits her
ecdysiastical
skills, and he finally
loses his head.

*

Shady *commedia*:
Thespian Canio,
cuckolded, reeling with
anguish and rage,

dons the clown face for an
improvisational
stab at real homicide
right on the stage.

*

Ogre-y roguery:
Baritone Scarpia
letches for Tosca, whose
dreamboat he's not.

Tosca does Scarp in, then
melodramatically
leaps from a wall after
Mario's shot.

*

*Bravo, bravissimo!*
Walther of Nuremberg
enters the songfest and
takes the top prize.

Plus, he wins Eva. Though
unrepresentative,
I really like this one:
nobody dies.



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# Great Expectations

by Frederick Turner

*"There is only one step from fanaticism to barbarism."*
—Diderot

Anna Myck-Wodecki

**In Defense of Elitism**
*by William A. Henry III*
*New York: Doubleday; 212 pp., $20.00*

◆

*In Defense of Elitism* joins what is now a spate of books documenting the madness of contemporary "political correctness." It is an amusing, readable, and journalistic work, full of the most delightful anecdotes about the absurdities of our times, unusual in that it locates the problem in the cult of egalitarianism, fed by the self-esteem movement: one of its more original observations concerns the rise of karaoke as a substitute for the art of the professional singer, of the snapshot as a substitute for art. Significantly, like many recent books on the same subject, it comes from the pen of a confessed and accredited liberal, staunchly loyal to the Democratic Party. It is now not only the right that is warning of the threat to our culture; perhaps a new consensus is emerging.

William Henry, who died last year, was a cultural critic for *Time* magazine. He begins his book by describing the current radical egalitarian attack on elitism, which, he postulates, springs from nostalgia for the experience of the Baby Boomers in college in the 60's, who shared an illusory and temporary condition of total equality until persistence, hard work, luck, and talent sorted out losers and winners. Henry traces the enshrinement of mediocrity through affirmative action, feminism, multiculturalism, and the nature-nurture controversy, and concludes by suggesting radical changes in the educational system, including a cut in the proportion of each generation to whom we attempt to give higher education, a greater concentration on vocational education, and the abolition of academic tenure. These suggestions are interesting, and we should study them while keeping in mind the experience of Britain, where Margaret Thatcher tried something similar with the result that the leftist faculty survived but many valuable programs in the sciences and humanities were cut. Still, something indeed needs to be done. In our universities, the artistic and humanistic heritage of the past is either ignored or vilified; at Johns Hopkins one year the only Shakespeare course was entitled "Shakespeare and Sodomy." Students are introduced to Mozart as a white racist, Aristotle as a sexist, and Austen as a sellout to male oppression. Instead, the young are urged to read the works of the Nazis Martin Heidegger and Paul de Man, the wife-murderer Louis Althusser, or the sadomasochist Michel Foucault (who spent his last years in the Bay Area knowingly infecting other homosexuals with AIDS).

Let us grant Henry's hypothesis that our culture is sick and needs cure. But surely the problem is older and deeper than the illusion of equality at 60's universities. To understand its roots, we must look at the cultural history of the last hundred years, summed up in the

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words "modernity," "modernism," "postmodernity," and "postmodernism." "Modernity" can be defined as the period within which the following conditions obtain: science establishes matters of fact; political theory, the left-right political axis, and the nation-state determine collective social organization; technological progress drives the conditions of life; secular values override all others; and the fundamental unit of political reality is the individual. "Modernism" is a movement in the arts, humanities, and cultural life, like the Renaissance or Romanticism, that has lasted roughly through this century. This movement is dominated by the thought of Marx and Freud. At its best, modernism was a grand intellectual and aesthetic adventure, a bold experiment on human nature. It is not entirely the fault of its pioneers that the adventure has largely come to grief; the experiment has shown the traditional wisdom to have been right after all. But there was a darker side to modernism, driven by the imperative of the denial of shame. Traditional institutions, myths, and rituals accepted the shame of our destructive relationship with the rest of nature, our innate inequalities, our sexuality and animal nature, and our painful economic relations with each other, and transformed the shame into epiphanic beauty and moral insight. In the absence of these institutions, modernism denied shame by means of right-wing and left-wing ideologies, displacements, and scapegoats. Modernism accepted the 19th-century scientific belief that the world is made of matter and works deterministically, that we are only animals, and that the brain is a machine. Right-wing modernists interpreted this condition as *carte blanche* for the ruthless survival of the fittest: the winner is the most successful predator, and is absolved of moral responsibility by the fact that he could, after all, do no other than follow the command of his nature. Left-wing modernists, faced with the choice between deterministic order and "free" disorder, identified creativity and morality with randomness, and advocated what the existentialists called the "*acte gratuit*"; the only morally praiseworthy person is the loser, and moral discourse becomes a sort of loud, persistent whine. Given these premises, many distinctions of quality became meaningless. Nevertheless, certain ideals persisted in modernism: progress, virility, rationality, coherence, the purity and unity of artistic form, artistic genius, psychic integrity, individualism, and the ideal of the enlightened state.

"Postmodern" is usually taken to describe the last 15 or so years (also a period extending indefinitely into the future). But many, including myself, believe that it is only a transitional period between the decay of cultural modernism and a truly new vision of the world: one of those periods like the mid-16th century in England—C.S. Lewis dubbed it the Drab Age—which preceded the English Renaissance, or like the Picturesque, which ushered in Romanticism. "Postmodernity" is the social, economic, and technological condition that has succeeded modernity. Its characteristics include the emergence of the postindustrial information economy; the replacement of hydraulic and mechanical metaphors with cybernetic and electronic ones; and the overthrow of the old class structure consisting of the aristocracy, the bourgeoisie, and the working class by a new one consisting only of the middle class and the underclass, in which the aristocracy has already disappeared, the industrial proletariat begins to be absorbed into the middle class, and an underclass emerges which has no place in the economic system. In postmodernity, the unified, secular, efficient, logistical ideology of the modernist nation-state is questioned and criticized by a whole collection of different worldviews—ethnic minority ideologies, feminism, resurgent religious and cult perspectives, gay consciousness, environmentalism, etc. Old scientific certainties are "called into question"—a catchphrase usually meaning "dismissed without consideration"—outside the scientific community, and profoundly revised and transformed from within it.

"Postmodernism" is an intellectual-cultural-artistic movement taking note of the postmodern condition and adapting itself to it. It is largely negative in its attitudes, being motivated by the elites' disappointment at the collapse of socialism. The intellectual core of postmodernism is poststructuralism, which includes deconstructionists like Jacques Derrida, reader-response theorists like Stanley Fish, new historicists like Michel Foucault, neo-Marxists like Frederic Jameson and Frank Lentricchia, radical feminists like Andrea Dworkin, Susan McKinnon, and Mary Daly, radical multiculturalists like Edward Said, deep ecologists like Arne Naess and George Sessions, neo-Freudians like Jacques Lacan and Gilles Deleuze, ecofeminists like Caroline Merchant, critics of science like Thomas Kuhn, Paul Feyerabend, and Jurgen Habermas, and cultural critics like Roland Barthes, Jean-François Lyotard, and Henri Baudrillard. At present, the dominant themes in the postmodernist academy are radical feminism and radical multiculturalism—really a new form of ethnic chauvinism in disguise. Postmodernism rejects the modernist ideals of progress, virility, rationality, coherence, the purity and unity of artistic form, artistic genius, psychic integrity, individualism, and the ideal of the enlightened state, but it resembles left-wing modernism in its hatred for capitalism, its contempt for traditional morality, its commitment to disorder and radical egalitarianism, and its unstated distrust of democracy. The final step in the postmodernist journey has been the rise of political correctness, the attempt to purge dissenting opinion from the ranks of the academic/artistic/professional brahmin caste; and, as William Henry points out, the systematic attack on excellence in all fields.

Deep intellectual flaws in modernism, partly inherited from the utopian hopes of the Romantics and the French Revolution, have ripened into hideous consequences. We are in serious trouble. But too broad a diagnosis would encourage the cultural despair that we must purge ourselves of if we are to regain our health. Our culture can be roughly divided into four aspects: the folk culture of traditional arts, crafts, customs, and rituals; the popular culture of the corporation, show business, professional sports, and the market; the public-service culture of the military, the professions, and government; and the brahmin culture of intellectuals, professional artists, and academics. The infection has not uniformly penetrated these different spheres of life.

The folk culture, by and large, is healthy and flourishing (despite recurrent reports of its imminent demise). Because of improvements in communication, it is increasingly hard to distinguish the traditionally rural folk culture from the traditionally urban popular culture—Nashville, for instance, is a threshold where the one is metamorphized into the other—but country musicians, high school bands and cheer-



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leader teams, local craftspeople, storytellers, and folk poets continue to be a vital source of cultural material. The folk churches are flourishing and full, and the exposed peccadilloes of their pastors testify, oddly, to the vitality of the cultural energies they exploit. Local and regional peculiarities and dialects persist. The popular culture is also relatively sound, despite or perhaps because of its inherent limitations—the compromises required for a mass audience, the need for profit, the rarity of true connoisseurship in a busy working population, and the compromises of commercialization. The public-service culture is partly healthy, partly sick—the cynicism has penetrated government, the press, and the public-service unions, especially secondary education, but has not deeply affected law, medicine, or the military. Even within the most deeply infected areas—journalism, teaching, politics, and the "helping professions"—a large number of workers in the field maintain high standards of cultural integrity and creativity. But it is the brahmin culture—the very people whose social function is to guide, inspire, enlighten, and challenge their community—that has let us down. Even here all is not lost. The sciences and the technological disciplines are as yet largely untouched by the infection, and will be one of the most important sources of cultural renewal. The secondary schools, which have always rightly taken their lead from the brahmins, have, however, fallen victim to the disease, as have many of the mainstream denomination clergy, who, though formerly the cultural leaders, now struggle to maintain their status by following *avant-garde* trends. The basic source of the problem is the academic humanities and the avant-garde arts; yet even here there are enclaves of healthy and creative work. It is in the official academic culture that the sickness is at its worst. Tragically, some of the antielitism that Henry attacks is justified in practice, if not in theory, by the elite itself.

But why should it matter to society what a small group of alienated intellectuals, in their airtight hothouse of *ressentiment* and arrogance, should choose as their current fashion? Have not avant-garde thinkers always sought to upset solid citizens with their posturings, and should not the rest of us tolerate them, because of the occasional miracle that they seem to produce from time to time? From a practical, social point of view, the function of the humanities is therapeutic, normative, and visionary—it helps heal the pains of life, encourages us to virtue, and sets up ideal goals to guide our aspirations. Might it not be argued that contemporary egalitarian polemic is bitter medicine for our ills, a chastisement for our complacencies and injustices, an unrealistic and exaggerated but liberating vision of human freedom? We can cite countless examples of discomforting social criticism, from the indignant poetry of the Old Testament prophets and the sacrificial violence of Roman and Greek sculpture, that remind us how terrible and tragic is the divine economy, through the humiliating depiction of human frailty and corruption in medieval theater and theology, to the vicious but cleansing satires of the Enlightenment and the moral questionings of the Romantics.

The situation now, however, is different from that which produced the Jeremiads of the past. Much contemporary avant-garde theory does not heal but rather wallows in the disease, and takes money for the exhibition of its sores. Its effect is to produce rage, despair, racial and ethnic hostility, sexual disgust, and hatred between the sexes. It does not encourage us to virtue, but to activities and attitudes that have always been considered harmful to society: violence, cynicism, a sense of the meaninglessness of everything, sexual promiscuity and perversion (however we define perversion—I do not consider homosexuality in itself, for instance, a perversion), immediate sensation rather than foresight and self-restraint, and disrespect for the dead, for the family, for hard work, for innocence, for heroism, for science, and for religion. It does not in fact contain any visionary ideal of the future or of a better world than this one, though its apparatus of social theory still faintly echoes old modernist ideas of a society of perfect equality, total freedom, love, and harmony with nature.

Though to the citizen the effects of such academic polemics and apologetics might seem safely confined to a small circle of *aficionados*, such is not the case; indeed, this confinement is a dangerous illusion. *Avant-garde* fashions affect university students through their professors, and university students become the elites and alumni of the future. Those who do not inhabit the academy can have no idea of the thought-control, the censorship, the paranoia, the terrifying cruelty that are common there, because their results appear so trivial: an academic suspension, the suppression of a publication, a bad tenure decision, the hiring of a second-rate member of a preferred ethnic or sexual category over a first-rate member of one of the pariah groups. But it is not only students who are corrupted by postmodernist theory; wealthy patrons of the humanities and the arts, wishing to appear *au fait* with what is going on, adopt the styles and attitudes of their academic *protegés*; and everybody else who wishes to be rich—which is almost everybody—then imitates *them*. Thus *avant-garde* ideas trickle down to the population at large, without improving in subtlety, decency, or breadth of tolerance as they do so. The universities are the nurseries of culture, and what happens there will affect all of society in the future.

The effects are tangible. The primary and secondary educational system, desperately looking for ways to justify its failure to educate an increasing fraction of our population, has seized upon secondhand postmodernist notions of cultural, ethical, and sexual relativism as a means of justifying the collapse of its standards. If present trends continue, we will end up with two systems of education, one funded at great expense to give the illusion of democratic training and accreditation to the masses—bread and circuses—and the other for the elites, the Grand Inquisitor caste, the children of the avant-garde mandarins themselves.

The problem with books like William Henry's is that they are strong on symptoms, weak on diagnosis, and weaker still on cure. We need a positive vision of the next phase of cultural history. It is not enough to complain about the abuses of the present and indulge in an ahistorical nostalgia for the past. The past, properly understood, is a fiercer and more shocking spiritual challenge than any right-wing conservative can imagine. I am not alone in seeing a huge and wonderful opportunity even now for our society and our culture, but it depends upon coldly recognizing the mistakes that we have made. The potential gains, intellectual and artistic, are worth the risk. Would it indeed be so bad once again to abandon a worldview and reach out for another? Would it not be in the best and boldest spirit of modernism itself to do so? ◁



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# Friends All Over the World

*by Philip Jenkins*

**The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy**
*by Christopher Lasch*
*New York: W.W. Norton; 276 pp., $22.00*

◆

In this final book of his splendid career, Christopher Lasch seeks to answer two questions, one that is increasingly heard in political debate, the other still too subversive for consideration in polite society. The first is "What's wrong with America?"—an issue not too far removed from the "Condition of England" so lengthily debated by Disraeli and many other Victorians. Closely related to this is the question "Can democracy survive?"—a natural corollary to the first topic, given the fundamental role played by democratic ideology in every phase of the nation's history.

Lasch identifies a familiar roster of American problems and crises, including urban decay, media sensationalism, the decline of traditional community loyalties, the deterioration of public spaces, and the collapse of popular interest or involvement in the political process. Thus far, the book might seem to resemble a hundred other counterparts over the last quarter of a century, ritual contrasts of the heartless and soulless present with the imagined communal past, with obligatory jibes at the liberal elites, Spiro's "nattering nabobs of negativism," and at modern faddism. Of course, given the author, this is not at all what we find. Lasch indeed enumerates the symptoms of cultural decay, but then proceeds to analyze them in a manner that is both novel and thought-provoking.

Lasch takes as his point of departure *The Revolt of the Masses*, in which Ortega y Gasset argued that the rise of mass politics posed a terminal threat to democratic practice, which had evolved within the more stately republican models of the 18th and 19th centuries. Not at all, says Lasch. In fact, the real threat in contemporary America arises not from the masses but from the elites, who have so detached themselves from the common beliefs and mores of the wider community as to have become thoroughly deracinated. They are "far more cosmopolitan, or at least more restless and migratory, than their predecessors." Their own beliefs are defined in contrast to a nightmare Middle America of the spirit, an imaginary land of Babbittry, "technologically backward, politically reactionary, repressive in its sexual morality, middlebrow in its tastes, smug and complacent, dull and dowdy." *We* are everything *They* are not. Though Lasch does not cite this particular example, the contrast is nicely epitomized by virtually every cartoon published in the last five years on the subject of guns and private gun ownership. The vicious, mentally defective sadist labeled "N.R.A.," Bubba with his Freudian attachment to his semiautomatic rifle, is more or less how our new bicoastal elites view a large majority of the American population, or anyone with the temerity to resist the abandonment of centuries of deeply ingrained traditions when called upon to do so at the drop of a syndrome. The propaganda is savage, unrestrained, and monstrously unfair, but not untypical.

In Lasch's view, the new elites simply hate the values and beliefs of traditional communities, to the extent that they are no longer capable of comprehending them, and venerate instead the ideals of diversity and multiculturalism. For them, the future will be characterized by a lack of borders, of restraints on the movement of people or money, and above all by the abandonment of any restraints that they see as preventing human fulfillment, namely the constrictions of sexual roles and of the family. Life becomes as unconstrained as the Internet or the Web, where one has no idea whether the information one uses is ultimately derived from Tulsa or Tibet. Not quoted here, but still relevant, is John Lennon's complex manifesto "Imagine" ("Imagine there's no countries . . . a Brotherhood of Man"). The model megalopolis of the new era is the utopian city of Los Angeles, with its "correct" orientation toward the Pacific rather than to what was once the American heartland. To fulfill our destiny in the Pacific century, it is first necessary to abandon those financial and economic restraints which prevent the ultimate merger into the nationless world federation. And someday, the final frontier will be attained: "Next year in Tokyo . . ." is the ideal.

In domestic terms, the consequences of the new internationalism are summarized by the immortal words of the English comedian Tony Hancock, who in his character as a radio ham pronounced that "I have friends all over the world . . . none in this country, but all over the world." While the new elites move into the science-fiction Pacific Rim of the soul, they increasingly lose what vestigial contact remains with middle-class and (God forbid) poor Americans, as the rich increasingly secure themselves on luxury reservations protected by security guards, leaving the public schools and police and streets to a desperate and brutalized plebs. The political conclusion of all this would presumably be Spenglerian, and the most optimistic outcome might be termed "Caesarism." Even worse scenarios were foreshadowed by the 1992 riots in that paragon of multicultural harmony, Los Angeles.

So much about this imaginary future appears familiar, even inevitable, that Lasch performs a major prophetic service by pointing out the many problems that arise when a society seeks to detach itself fully from its traditions and commonplaces, from family, community, and religion. The task might have been done somewhat better by *Brave New World* (written by a contemporary of Ortega), but Lasch's jeremiads gain power from their strictly contemporary relevance. His central theme can be seen as profoundly un-American, nothing less than an assault on the evil consequences of mobility and a celebration of the fixed landmarks. Democracy, he argues, pre-

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supposes community or at least communities, some commonly accepted forms of belief and ideology. Absent "a common ground, common standards, a common frame of reference . . . society dissolves into nothing more than contending factions . . . a war of all against all." To see the process of social disintegration at work, and under government sponsorship, just glance at the categories of an affirmative action form (and no, you *can't* just tick "American").

Lasch traces the growing schism between elites and masses in several fine case studies, which consider, for example, the modern environment of journalism, the therapeutic "abolition of shame," and the world of "academic pseudoradicalism" (incidentally, this is far more than simply another parade of p.c. follies). Lasch also reasserts the virtues of religion against the secularism of the new elites. Of course, the two concepts are by no means mutually exclusive, as secularism as such neither prohibits nor restrains the emergence of religious or even apocalyptic visions of the world. It merely ensures that such ideas will emerge in surreptitious forms peculiarly marked by hypocrisy, faddism, moral confusion, and hucksterism, and that they will provide a moral justification for more or less any form of vulgar self-aggrandizement. Was organized religion any worse than the cultism and fundamentalism of the allegedly secular elites?

*Revolt of the Elites* shows some signs of patchworking, and can usefully be read as individual essays ultimately drawn together into the larger whole. This caveat apart, the book is a stimulating example of cultural criticism at its best, raising the sort of questions that should be central to public debate. Presumably they will be, once the media can turn their attention from such pivotal phenomena as the O.J. Simpson case. I would get more involved in local issues myself, but I just found this neat Web-site at the University of Osaka . . .

*Philip Jenkins is the author of* Using Murder: The Social Construction of Serial Homicide *(Aldine de Gruyter, 1994).*

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# The State of Union

*by Allan Carlson*

**The Transformation of Rural Life: Southern Illinois, 1890-1990**
*by Jane Adams*
*Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press;*
*321 pp., $49.95*

"I grew up a few miles from the county this book deals with," anthropologist Jane Adams writes in her account of rural Union County, Illinois. "My family's farm, although dating only to the early 1940's, is now essentially abandoned, the community emptied." Her book describes this loss, serving both as indirect autobiography and scholarly investigation into the rise and fall of a small agrarian society.

I was at first uneasy with Adams's reliance on historical anthropology as a means of studying 20th-century American farm people. She uses aerial photographs from the 1930's and excavations by her graduate students to document the footpaths between farmsteads and the social fabric they represented. She dissects the Queen Contest of the Cobden village Peach Festival as though it were a South Sea tribal ritual. Yet the world that Adams knew as a child has seen its families dispersed, its values consigned to oral tradition, and its physical structure reduced to weathered and rusting relics. With sadness, I finished the book convinced that her techniques have become appropriate vehicles for grasping the identity and meaning of American rural communities.

Adams acknowledges her debt to a "feminist pedagogy group" at Southern Illinois University where she teaches, in this case turning feminist analysis to good use "to reclaim women's roles in Union County agriculture." She documents the vital part wives played in the farm economy between 1890 and 1945, through direct control of small dairy and poultry operations ("the butter and egg money"), regular fieldwork, and high fertility. The Union County wife also oversaw the maintenance of a home that was at once "workshop, warehouse, mess hall, dormitory, recreation center, infirmary, and funeral parlor" for the owners, tenants, hired hands, and children who resided on the farm. In addition, Adams shows convincingly that the misguided provision of an urban-oriented Home Economics program to farm women, through the agency of the United States Department of Agriculture's Home Bureau program, played a direct role in dismantling rural family life.

A fascinating portion of the book gives the detailed histories, based on interviews, archaeological digs, and documentary evidence, of seven Union County farms. These farms lay in that part of the state known informally since the 1840's as "Egypt." Settled primarily by migrants from Tennessee and Kentucky, Union County was always culturally tied to the Upland South. Adams reconstructs the development there of a diversified agrarian economy based on fruit and vegetable production, timber cutting, and hunting and fishing. This system reached its apogee between 1890 and 1920, when the countryside was fully populated and Union County farm products flowed northward, primarily to Chicago. Households were large and children ubiquitous. On the Walton Farm, for example, tenant Ed Brimm counted 100 children over several generations growing up on its bounty.

Two decades of agricultural depression, beginning in 1920, unsettled the class relations of Union County, but did not alter the social environment of its residents. That change came only after 1945, when "the entire structure and organization of daily life shifted." The industrialization of Union County agriculture accelerated, with the central government acting as a common agent of change. Cheaper fruits and vegetables from California, grown on land irrigated by federally subsidized water and carried over the new federal superhighways, displaced Union County produce in Chicago markets. School consolidation, commonly brokered by Extension Agents, undercut community ties. New dairy technologies and regulations drove small producers (mostly farm wives) out of the butter and cream business, while massive "chicken factories" displaced the small flocks. Draft horses, still the dominant source of field power in 1945, virtually disappeared, replaced by capital-intensive tractors enjoying favored tax treatment and catering to the fixations of the new "college-educated



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farmer." Hybrid seed corn (price $20 a bushel) drove out open pollination strains ($3 a bushel), as standardization became the buzzword. At the urging of Extension Agents and bankers, most Union County farmers either modernized and expanded, or shut down.

The social effects were vast. Among women, some of the wealthier farm wives made the transition to full-time homemakers. But most eventually took off-farm jobs, simply to pay current bills. Industrially processed food and supermarkets replaced home gardens, smokehouses, and canning. Hog butchering, a community ritual as late as the 1930's, completely disappeared, as did other informal methods of economic cooperation. Children vanished as well, as rural fertility tumbled considerably below that of the state's urban areas. The age pyramid for the county's farm population—healthy as late as 1940—became a grotesque stick by 1960, dominated by a bulge among the older categories.

Adams also carefully documents the remodeling of rural houses under federal guidelines, as suburban designs, complete with dens, patios, and picnic tables, displaced layouts dedicated to home production. By the 1960's, "the farm home was as distantly related to the farm enterprise as the urban home was to the [city] family's workplaces." The towns and villages of Union County deteriorated over the same decades, as independent stores failed and a sense of community dissipated: "Antique and junk shops replaced the once busy stores, as if, no longer able to produce anything the nation wanted, people had only their history left to sell."

The 1980's destroyed what was left of Union County's agrarian society, as the agricultural credit squeeze, federal policies aimed at "easing out" small-scale farms, and a series of bitter winters and springtime floods converged. In the early 1990's, local industry faded as well, with the county seat's two significant factories—a shoe plant and a bakery—shutting down during the same week (shoe production going, it was rumored, to India). Significantly, the construction of nursing homes and the selection of the area as the site for a maximum security prison were the only countervailing economic trends. In 1990, 42 percent of the personal income of county residents came directly from government sources, primarily Social Security and Medicaid. A region known 50 years earlier for its agriculture and small-scale industry had become a ward of the central state. Consigned for the time being to tending to the elderly and to the incarcerated criminal class of the triumphant urban-industrial sphere, Union County faced a still cloudier future in what Adams labels "the post-Fordist regime of flexible accumulation in a globalist economy."

The author describes the failed efforts of some Union County residents to defend their small world, ranging from quiet resistance against "expert" pressure to adopt "labor-saving technologies" to the creation of the Peach Festival. But in the end, the surviving farmers of Union County succumbed to the modernist mentality, embracing a faith in expertise, the separation of work from leisure, and the application of monetary value to time. While other futures were possible, Adams concludes that Union County citizens had neither the intellectual means nor the public arenas through which to articulate those options. More fundamentally, they lacked the "powerful counterideology . . . which binds religious groups like the Amish and the Hutterites," and which she believes is necessary for the survival of alternative forms of production.

There are flaws in Adams's analysis. She too generously assesses the long-term impact of the New Deal on local communities, and she gives inadequate recognition to the role of the "homemaker" as a barrier to modernity in an urbanized setting. But these are minor annoyances. Adams's writing is crisp, the details of her narrative are at once familiar and remarkable, and the lessons that she draws are generally correct.

Jane Adams notes that "there appear to be particular periods when the common people, if they have sufficient vision and solidarity, might change the course of history." The reader can plausibly view *The Transformation of Rural Life* as a form of populist scholarship, helping to create the preconditions for just such a period in the future.

*Allan Carlson is the president of The Rockford Institute and the publisher of* Chronicles.

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# Civis Romanus Sum

*by Thomas Fleming*

**Being a Roman Citizen**
*by Jane F. Gardner*
*London: Routledge;*
*244 pp., $49.95*

◆

What does it mean to be a citizen? The answer we give will depend on the nation we live in and on the age of the world in which we find ourselves. The French used to define citizenship not, as the English and Americans do, by the accident of birthplace, but by descent. Citizens were the children of citizens, and this *ius sanguinis* concept has been partially restored in France, and Governor Pete Wilson thinks it may be a partial answer to the United States' immigration crisis.

No people in the history of the world has ever wrestled so seriously with the concept of citizenship as the Romans. While most other ancient peoples (e.g., the Jews, the Athenians) were fiercely parochial in their eagerness to restrict citizenship rights, the Romans offered their allies and subject communities the possibility of incorporation into the Roman commonwealth. The process took time, usually involving the intermediate step of the Latin Right (the right to conduct commerce and intermarry with Roman citizens), and it was facilitated by the plantation of Roman colonies, but Rome's comparative generosity enabled her to create something like a universal empire whose subjects shared in the blessings, as well as the burdens, of citizenship.

The meaning of Roman citizenship has been investigated in detail by Claude Nicolet in a work translated into English as *The World of the Citizen in Republican Rome* (1980). Jane Gardner has set herself the more limited task of examining groups that lay upon the fringes: freedmen, women, children, moral reprobates, and "the handicapped." This approach has a usefulness that extends beyond these borderline groups, since what is normal can sometimes be defined most easily by establishing the limits of normality.

The most interesting (at least to me) aspect of her work is the discussion of women and children, both of whom



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belong fully to the commonwealth but do not share fully the privileges of citizenship. For at least a generation it has been fashionable to stigmatize Roman family relationships for their coldness and to condemn the severity of Roman fathers in the exercise of their authority (the *patria potestas*). The most important scholar to take this view (derived, apparently, from Philippe Ariès' entirely erroneous theory of childhood) is Paul Veyne in his brilliant, if eccentric, contribution to the *History of Everyday Life*.

Gardner, relying on recent work of Richard Saller and Edward Champlin, paints a rather different portrait of the Roman family. The exercise of the power of life and death was, for example, limited first to the father's right to repudiate a child at birth and later to carry out a sentence of death after he had convoked a family council. Fathers could and did use corporal punishment, but most of the literary sources stress paternal *pietas*, that is affectionate loyalty, as the hallmark of fatherhood. Since whippings were a servile punishment, Roman citizens were reluctant to apply it to their own free-born sons. Unemancipated sons did remain, in theory, under their fathers' thumbs without even the capacity to make contracts, but well-to-do fathers granted allowances and even found ways of enabling their sons to conduct business.

The status of freedmen was akin to that of an unemancipated son, meaning a son who remained in his father's *potestas*. To his patron he owed respect and even service, and he could not, in principle, sue his former master, if the suit would endanger the patron's reputation. Although these restrictions have been analyzed as devices to reinforce class distinctions and preserve the status quo, Gardner sees them as a natural outgrowth of a political ethic rooted in the family. If freedmen labored under particular obligations (which they often attempted to shirk), their masters, too, were obliged to respect the former slave's free condition, even when the freedman continued to live in his master's house and discharge the same duties. "The central aim of the regulations between patrons and freedmen . . . appear to have been to maintain stability and harmony in Roman society."

The Romans looked at everyday life and moral obligation from a perspective that seems quite foreign to our post-Enlightenment world. A woman was subject, at least in principle, to the authority of some man, her father, husband, or guardian. Yet Roman women in the upper classes were remarkably forceful characters, their independence being guaranteed by their wealth and social connections. Since they could not exercise *potestas* over others, they were forbidden to adopt children or even to head a household. Emancipated women could engage in litigation, dispose of property, and marry and divorce at will, and even unemancipated women, when it was necessary for them to transact business or manage families, found ways of evading or simply ignoring the legal restrictions. Gardner offers an unconvincing Marxist interpretation of women's status, which she bases ultimately on the physical inferiority of the female sex, but since there is no society where women have a status equal (much less superior) to men's, any attempt to explain Roman gender differences is *petitio principi*. Roman status differences took the form they did because of the importance attached to the authority of male household heads as the foundation of citizenship.

Much is made in current American law of a supposed right to privacy, but Greeks and Romans conceived of the public/private distinction in terms quite different from what an American judge might imagine. The line was drawn not at the person but at the threshold of the house. A Roman marriage was a more or less private arrangement between the contracting parties, typically the husband and his father-in-law, and the law was invoked only when problems arose—for example, in disputes over dowries after a divorce. Most sexual indiscretions were treated as private matters, but passive homosexuality and prostitution were seen as a defilement of the civil order and might result in loss of certain privileges. Some occupations were morally tarnished, and prostitutes, gladiators, and actors could not exercise the privileges of citizenship. However, what often seems arbitrary or capricious in Roman law turns out to result from a coherent view of human life in which the household—not the individual or the state—is at the center. Prostitutes, by their very profession, could not bear citizen children, and public performers lacked the moral seriousness to discharge the duties incumbent upon a Roman father, much less a Roman senator. It is hard to know which of Caligula's pranks was more offensive, his facetious proposal to make his horse a senator or his own athletic demonstrations.

In her conclusion, Gardner points to the two factors that persist throughout Roman history: first, the insistence upon personal presence in any legal transactions, an attitude that led, for example, to an emphasis on witnesses over documents and to rather curious complications for the deaf and blind who were unable to make their own wills; and, second, the special position of the father as household head. "Both are aspects of the same principle, namely the autonomy of the individual familia; an autonomy breached by the state, so far as the conduct of the internal affairs of the familia is concerned, only where this may be felt to endanger the stability of other parts of society." The Roman father's authority, so far from endangering the safety and welfare of his dependents, served actually as a buffer against state intrusion into the household. "Reliance was placed on the *pater* to take care of much that in modern society is provided for, or enforced by, the state."

For all its many and manifest defects, the Roman legal and political system


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was the solid foundation of the greatest and most benign empire the world has ever known. Modern Christians who rail against the inhumanity of infanticide or sexual perversity in the ancient world ought to take a good look around them before presuming to quarrel with Gibbon's judgment that the age of the Antonines was "the period in the history of the world during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous." In that period the empire reached its greatest extent, but so far from being a monolithic and top-heavy state apparatus, the Roman empire was a patchwork of provinces, colonies, and alliances in which imperial power was exerted largely to defend the inhabitants from foreign invasion and to administer a fairer legal system than the conquered peoples had ever known. The basis of Roman power was the autonomous and quasi-sovereign household, and most of the everyday business of government was carried on locally by local citizens. When Trajan wished to provide for poor children, he simply instructed local communities to buy enough land that would enable them to grow the necessary food, and while the empire flourished, it stayed out of personal life and most local business. St. Paul paid a backhanded compliment to the pagans when he declared that whoever does not take care of the members of his own household is worse than an unbeliever.

Roman citizenship was defined by liberty, not by subjection. If fathers would not whip their sons for fear of making them servile, the Roman authorities could not torture a citizen or invade his household on some petty pretext. This admirable and humane system of government did not last forever. Unsettled by barbarian invasions and dynastic contests, the rulers turned increasingly to military models and command structures. The *patria potestas* was weakened around the edges, local governments were more and more subordinate to the imperial administration, and the concept of active citizenship was degraded in direct proportion as citizenship was extended to all parts of the Roman world. What had been, in the days of Paul of Tarsus, a cherished prize to be won was reduced to an empty name like the term "American," which only requires a piece of paper and a pair of blue jeans. If it is too late for Americans to restore their old republican notion of American citizenship, then it may be time to examine the Roman alternative. Even under a Caligula or Nero, most Roman citizens were free to mind their own business and govern their own autonomous households, with little or no interference. The empire had slaves, yes, but it also had free men, and if we no longer have slavery in name, we have long since given up liberty in fact.

*Thomas Fleming is the editor of* Chronicles.

# Johnson in His Time

*by Frank Brownlow*

Dr. Johnson & Mr. Savage
*by Richard Holmes*
*New York: Pantheon Books;*
*260 pp., $23.00*

◆

Every well-read person used to know Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, and, knowing that collection, knew who Richard Savage was—or at least knew who Richard Savage told people he was.

Richard Savage was a minor poet and convicted murderer, a charming rascal and rackety man about town entirely lacking normal instincts of prudence and self-preservation. Judged as material for a book, he was a striking example of the way life not only imitates fiction, but can become virtually indistinguishable from it. Savage claimed with obsessive pertinacity to be the illegitimate son of Earl Rivers and Anne, Lady Macclesfield. He told everyone he met that his alleged mother had disowned and abused him, and over a period of about 25 years he made her life miserable with libel, blackmail, and the threat of violence. Written down and published by Savage and his friends, the story acquired the convincing objectivity of print.

Such claims to identity, originating in the paranoias and anxieties of life, are fascinating. Passionately believed by the claimant and his supporters, they resist-


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**"The Camp of the Saints**
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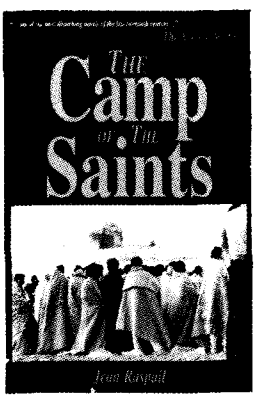
*The Atlantic Monthly*, December 1994

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ed final proof until modern times brought the invention of DNA testing. It seems likely that most of them, like more common but similar claims to noble descent, have been false. In the case of Savage, he was probably the child of a nurse or servant employed by Lady Macclesfield or someone close to her, who knew about her illegitimate children and passed the story on. Whatever the source of such claims, the narrative framing the alleged fact of birth usually conforms to current fashion in storytelling, whether it involves lost colonists and drowned sailors or, as with Savage, the conviction that an anonymous 18th-century Nobody can turn out to be Somebody after all.

A self-created, well-published, and widely read fiction, Savage as witty, noble bastard was a character from literature who had migrated into the London streets, coffee houses, and taverns via the pages of Grub Street newsletters and magazines. His fictional contemporaries were the heroes of Fielding, but Shakespeare's Edmund in *King Lear* was among his ancestors. One might even say that as an inhabitant of, writer for, and creation of Grub Street, Savage was a dream come true, the embodiment of one of Dryden's or Swift's nightmares of social and literary subversion. So, for that matter, was his friend, the young Samuel Johnson, when he first arrived in London as an aspiring Grub Street hack.

Outside the shrinking circles of the literate, Johnson is now remembered, if at all, as the self-confident sage and conversationalist of Boswell's *Life*: wise, funny, kind, sensible, and, above all, reliable in word and in person; the very embodiment of the Man of Letters. Yet Boswell's Johnson, like Richard Savage, was an imaginative creation, and the Johnson his other friends knew—Mrs. Thrale, for instance—was a rather different man. He was still funny, self-confident, and a wonderful talker and writer, but he was not always reliable, not always terribly sensible, and often difficult to cope with. Moreover, he had once been young, desperately unhappy, and near to hopelessness.

In March 1737 Samuel Johnson, having ventured and lost his wife's small capital, went to London to scrape a living from writing. He was 27 years old, a brilliant young man handicapped by a grotesquely ugly appearance: tall, rawboned, partly blind, scarred by scrofula, and afflicted by spasmodic tics and convulsive movements. His recent, bizarre marriage to a woman more than 20 years older than himself was proving unsatisfactory, and he was developing nomadic tendencies, on occasion preferring a night in the streets to sharing lodgings with his wife.

This was the period when, soon after his arrival in London, he met Savage, and the unlikely pair—dapper wit and self-made nobleman; big, awkward provincial—became friends. The friendship lasted several years, providing Johnson's biographers with a famous anecdote and also with a problem. The anecdote told how young Johnson and the older Savage, both hard-up, would spend the night walking the streets of London, unable to afford lodging. The problem arose from the friendship itself: How could one explain Dr. Johnson's intimate association with a notoriously bad lot like Richard Savage?

A reader of Johnson's *Life of Savage* encounters at least two related problems. Why did a man as temperamentally skeptical as Johnson accept Savage's stories? And how can one preserve Johnson's reputation as a man of literary conscience and moral sympathy in the face of his savage, libelous attacks on Savage's putative mother, Lady Macclesfield, not to mention the sheer inaccuracy of his *Life*? The two questions have simple though unflattering answers. Johnson was a raw provincial with a chip on his shoulder when he met Savage, already celebrated as a poet and as the embodiment of a personal legend. Savage's talk and character dazzled him, and his attention flattered him. Then, when Savage died a few years later, Johnson found himself well placed to write a saleable *Life*, which he published (as Richard Holmes points out) with a firm known for sensational books. Holmes's tactic is to incorporate both answers into his book, dignifying them by dwelling on the significance of Savage's life and Johnson's response to it. "When Johnson came to write Savage's *Life* in 1743, he put Savage's night walking at the heart of the story of his literary career. He did it so powerfully that he created a legend, almost an 18th-century archetype, of the Outcast Poet moving through an infernal cityscape." And so Holmes presents Johnson's *Life of Savage* and the man himself as precursors of the Romantic movement.

This makes for impressive writing, but is it true? After all, the whole 18th century could be treated as the precursor of Romanticism. The problem with *Dr. Johnson & Mr. Savage* is that it is a literary brick made without straw. The only evidence for Johnson's friendship with Savage is his own anecdote of the night walks, and the *Life* itself. Holmes's book consists of his interpretation of those two pieces of evidence, framed in material drawn from standard works on both authors.

It is not a convincing interpretation. As reported by Johnson's friends, his telling of the anecdote did not present London as "an infernal cityscape," but as the setting for a high-spirited defiance of circumstances. Nor is it likely that most readers of the *Life* would put the night walks at the center of it. Nothing in Johnson's approach encourages one to find that kind of symbolist form in the book.

Insofar as the *Life* has a central, recurrent theme, it is Savage's tale of abandonment by his mother, the only aspect of his story which Johnson accepted unreservedly. Indeed, not to have accepted it would have gone against the expectations of his readers. For as Holmes's narrative reveals without its author quite realizing it, there was a moment when Savage's private fantasy and its related campaign of stalking, libel, and blackmail became a public phenomenon, and the entire social and literary world ganged up on poor Lady Macclesfield, making Savage famous in the process. In this way his story became the basis of his relationship to the world, including young Samuel Johnson: friendship with Savage required acceptance of his legend. Holmes, intent upon scrutinizing the mouse of the midnight walks, misses entirely this truly extraordinary mountain of significance that brought them forth.

In Johnson's friendship with Savage, and in his writing of the *Life*, we catch him in deep collusion with the group psychology of his time. The position was not to his credit, but he was not alone in it. All sorts of unlikely people believed Savage, and offered him friendship and money, Alexander Pope among them. No doubt the effective opener of so many hearts and purses, including young Johnson's, was the claim to noble birth; and one aspect of the many-faceted joke that resulted was that Savage, securely locked into his own delusions of nobility, always ended up treating his benefactors with contempt



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because their charity affronted his dignity. There were incidents of sheer farce. Believing Savage to be his cousin, Lord Tyrconnel took him into his house and gave him a pension of 200 pounds; Savage brought disreputable drinking cronies in for the night, and pawned the books Tyrconnel gave him. None of this struck Johnson as at all funny.

One sympathizes with Holmes's wish to modify the Boswellian picture of Johnson by incorporating into it the man who knew and admired Savage. On the other hand, one respects Boswell for his uneasiness over Johnson's credulity and for doubting Savage's claims. There is, in fact, a fairly important but unadoring book to be written, relating Savage's story to the fictions of his time and attempting to understand why Johnson and everyone else so eagerly believed it. This book might begin by pointing out some contrasts—between Johnson's judicious, authoritative prose and his tatterdemalion subject, between the forgiving irony of his comments on Savage and the unmitigated ferocity of his attacks on Lady Macclesfield. It would notice, too, how many 18th-century writers—Pope, Swift, and Johnson among them, to name only the three greatest—led uncentered, displaced emotional lives. The precision of their writing may express their self-mastery and courage, but the stories they told and enjoyed often revealed how unhappy and angry they were.

This is territory Holmes skirts without entering it. One of his best chapters, "Love," reproduces (slightly inaccurately) a Johnsonian anecdote told twice by Mrs. Thrale in *Thraliana* and in her published *Anecdotes*. It seems that in the course of a light conversation about a novel by Fanny Burney, Johnson was asked what had been the happiest period of his life. He replied with one of the saddest sentences in the annals of English literature: "It was that year in which he spent one whole evening with Molly Aston." This happy evening occurred some 40 years before the date of the question. Holmes quotes the sentence as evidence that Johnson was capable of love; what it really shows is how little love he experienced.

*Frank Brownlow teaches English at Mount Holyoke College.*
*His most recent book is*
Shakespeare, Harsnett, and the Devils of Denham.

# Brief Mentions

**Letters from Lake Como: Explorations in Technology and the Human Race.** *By Romano Guardini (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 115 pp., $9.99.*

Romano Guardini (1885-1968), a Roman Catholic priest and professor of Christian philosophy at the universities of Breslau, Berlin, Tübingen, and Munich, was a year old when he emigrated with his parents to Germany from his native Italy. Returning to his homeland after many years, Guardini found himself confronting the physical reality that he had both predicted and described in his theoretical speculation. As Louis Dupré says in an introduction, "If Guardini's theoretical works contain the justification, the *Letters* present the vision." "Inexpressible beauty is here," Guardini wrote of the valleys of Brianza, "but it gives me no joy. I do not see how any understanding person could find joy in it." What he understood was that the poignant beauty he saw everywhere around him was doomed, as immemorial human culture, which he defined as the living relationship between human beings and nature, succumbed to the onslaught of a barbarous technology presenting an artificial alternative to nature, and creating basic forms of human existence filled with something other than their own contents: something abstract, not living. Christian optimism and philosophical good taste restrained Guardini from sentimental pessimism, and even permitted him to discern in the coming *novus ordo seclorum* a new civilization in some ways equal and perhaps superior to the one which came before. While those born under the old dispensation could never adapt themselves to such a world, generations to come might nevertheless succeed in inventing new but equally human relationships within a culture transformed by the logic of technique. "We need to be a little imaginative. Utopias have so often become the reality that imagination is legitimate. . . . Human existence has advanced so far, humans have taken so big a grip of themselves, the possibilities of achievement and destruction have become so incalculable that the time has come for a new virtue, a new skill in intellectual government in which, made serious by so much experience, we can break free from entanglement in departmentalized spheres of thinking and life. That is what might take place in these best among us." Seventy years after the first independent publication of the *Letters*, the "great favor of history" for which Guardini hoped appears not to have been granted. Rather, the view from the end of the 20th century suggests that technology will certainly triumph as a destructive force unless man's moral evolution matches and exceeds his intellectual development, and men succeed in subordinating their intellectual will to their moral imagination. The enlightenment of the mind by itself is insufficient.

*—Chilton Williamson, Jr.*

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They saw no danger, didn't deal
with the invaders, didn't live.
Readers of Norman Vincent Peale,
they were all thinking positive.

***

## Women Are More Caring . . .

*by Richard Moore*

Right, dear! Men just don't care
about people, don't dare
interest themselves too much
in what it means to touch.

Men wronged in love will yet
wish only to forget,
grow sad, vague, strangely bland,
refuse to understand . . .

but in that situation,
since first God shaped creation
before men built Stonehenge,
women have screamed, "Revenge!"



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# Letter From England

*by Derrick Turner*

## The Necessity for Ancestor-Worship

◆

"It is a noble faculty of our nature which enables us to connect our thoughts, sympathies and happiness with what is distant in place and time; and looking before and after, to hold communion at once with our ancestors and our posterity. There is a moral and philosophical respect for our ancestors, which elevates the character and improves the heart"—Daniel Webster.

Now that history is becoming "herstory," it becomes necessary that civilized people *actively* preserve that which would otherwise perish. A nation can survive only insofar as the *idea* of the nation survives; and this national idea is made up of many individual experiences and ideals, bound together by historical forces, and feeling themselves part of one related, corporate entity. It follows, therefore, that we should endeavor especially to retain our parochial, familial memories, because these constitute our national patrimony.

If we do not know about the history of our own families, we should attempt to find out about them. However unremarkable, or even ignoble, these histories may be when seen in isolation, they have become woven into the national being, like individual threads worked into a tapestry, and have taken on a vicarious, grander life of their own when viewed in the national context. Researching family history is not only fascinating in itself, but also gives a long-term perspective on those events of today which can otherwise overwhelm us.

There is something appealing about genealogy. To research your kin's history is to research the deepest recesses of your own character. It is the most *fundamental* of all hobbies. If your kin had not been who they were, you would not be who you are. As Hazlitt reminds us: "Features alone do not run in the blood; vices and virtues, genius and folly, are transmitted through the same sure but unseen channel." An awareness of who your parents are or were, who their parents were and who your parents' parents were—and where they lived—helps you to connect, somehow, with history. All of a sudden, you become inextricably linked with those who have gone before, with those whose romances and marriages made you, by creating your parents' parents' parents.

Dusty parish ledgers come to life; dry records are hand-colored and reanimated; long-past, faintly fragrant summer evenings are relived, in some fragmentary way, at least; freeze-framed scenes from your familial history are filled again, momentarily, with passion. The faraway becomes the close-to; the coat-of-arms in the hallway is, suddenly, more than just a decoration. Precursors walked where the white horse is cut into the hill, and walked beneath the line of trees that bisects the deeply familiar horizon. A sense of pride, in your longevity if in nothing else, fills you—you realize the unique contribution that your clan has made to history—it may even be that you uncover some romantic historical or noble connection. Like a man with a metal-detector, you cannot be sure what the next step will unearth. Like him, when he handles some long-entombed Roman coin, you are intimately in touch with the past.

Genealogy compels you to realize both how unimportant and how important you are—unimportant in terms of history (one small organism among many, all of them with preoccupations and concerns every bit as real as yours), important insofar as a duty devolves upon you, *not to let the line die out*. Genealogy puts you in communion with your family's past, and in communion with your country's past. You are a link in a long chain, and the chain of your kin is one of many forming the pattern of your national history and informing your present national consciousness. There is an intrinsic satisfaction in being inescapably part of both a genetic family and a national family. There is a deep satisfaction in the idea of your being true to your forefathers, of being true to type.

When travel writer H.V. Morton visited Lewes in Sussex in 1942, he stated the consanguinity of genealogy thus: "And through it all runs the connecting link of a local spirit: the feeling that sheep-lanes which became lanes and then grew into roads, still carry men to the old town on the hill, men who are not unlike their fathers or their grandfathers" (*I Saw Two Englands*, Methuen, 1942). Despite the dysfunctional atomization of the years since the war, despite the progressive disintegration of the family unit, despite the increased mobility of ideas and populations, a chord of harmony is struck by Morton's simple words, and we get a tantalizing whiff of a solidity and permanency that is becoming a memory (or is an unattainable dream).

Genealogy enables us to gather some of that protective shield around us, and to wrap ourselves in a feeling of order and rootage. Not all of us, not even many of us, I suspect, want to be rolling stones all our lives; genealogy reminds us that there was once at least a semblance of immutability. We have visions of Norman churches, full of dusty sunlight—of half-timbered houses—and overgrown graveyards—and remote farms—and the crowded streets of lost cities—and we see people similar to ourselves all the way through. Genealogy reminds us that nothing is futile, that no act is insignificant, that some acts—such as the admission of millions of immigrants from the Third World into Britain—are of the utmost significance. Will Alice Duer Miller's "blond, bowed," blue-eyed English faces *really* "always be / found in the cream of English places / Till England herself sink into the sea"?

Genealogy reminds us that we may *definitely* attain to some kind of immortality. In an age when many of us have lost our religion forever, that is some consolation. We share something of our features and traits with ancestors who may be very distant indeed; they have become immortal through their children, and we may through ours. Content in our deep roots, and in our assured future, we spread contentment around us; we realize with the now-obscure but not



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dead Landon that: "The pride of blood is a most important and beneficial influence." In a world speedily becoming homogenized, it is vital that we retain some vestige of exclusivity, so that when seen in retrospect by some future Santayana, "Our distinction and glory, as well as our sorrow, will have lain in being something in particular, and in knowing what it is." The landscape is real and substantial, more than just a pretty picture. We own it, because our ancestors have fertilized it, and we become aware of the need for its preservation; our country is real, a long saga of discrete, diverse threads blending and yet retaining their distinctiveness; we are venerable, and valuable in our own right; and the whole world becomes clearer and more colorful all at once.

*Derrick Turner is a freelance writer in London.*

## Letter From Moscow

*by Lawrence A. Uzzell*

### Reform From Within

◆

Across Serpukhvskaya Street from my apartment is a vintage Soviet-style "Palace of Culture," its blank concrete walls topped by an immense neon sign. Ten years ago it offered lectures on class consciousness to factory workers; now it houses a discotheque, which plays American rock music until 6 A.M. Ten years ago an order from the district party committee would have served as a de facto antinoise ordinance. Now my neighbors and I just use earplugs. The Russian language does not have a word for "privacy," and the average Russian still does not expect to have much control over his environment. The country is still a place of ubiquitous loudspeakers, which are now available to people who call themselves "*biznesmeny*" but who actually have more in common with Beltway bandits or Tammany Hall. The inherently collectivist tendencies of rock music fit rather well into this setting: Russia has subjected me to as much compulsory rock-listening—on Aeroflot, in Metro stations, even at the exclusive Menatep Bank—as my college


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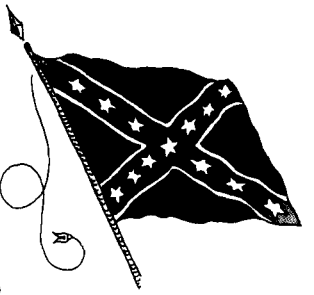

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dormitory did in the 1960's.

Anti-Russian bigots are wrong when they claim that Russia was always a lawless state, an "Oriental despotism" having nothing in common with the West. In its deepest roots Russia is of course Western, an heir with us to Athens and Jerusalem. The Kremlin is not the Hindu pantheon. The 19th century saw the emergence here of an independent judiciary and trial by jury. But the Bolsheviks spent generations destroying the culture of lawfulness, and it will probably take generations to restore it. My neighbors rely on earplugs because they know that even if the city Duma were to enact an antinoise ordinance, enforcement would still be a matter of connections and bribery.

Russia's cities are still safer after dark than America's, but crime has risen as much here in just a few years as it has in New York or Washington in recent decades. Private security guards in military-style camouflage fatigues seem to be more numerous than necessary—until you realize that they play a dual role. I know of several cases in which firms such as travel agencies have experienced the following sequence: first, a mysterious visitor pressures them to pay protection money to keep their offices from being pillaged; second, they hasten to hire a security firm; third, the visitor returns, has a private chat with the new security guards, and leaves amicably—this time for good. It does not take a lot of imagination to deduce that for many of these security firms, the Russian mafia is less adversary than business partner.

One of the milestones in the transition to the rule of law was supposed to be President Yeltsin's new constitution. Yeltsin and his allies proclaimed that their victory in the constitutional referendum made up for their defeat in the simultaneous parliamentary elections. (A recount has since shown that the referendum did not in fact produce a large enough majority for ratification, but both Yeltsin and the parliament—the very existence of which depends on the constitution which many of its members opposed—have simply ignored this awkward fact.) Today the constitution is largely a dead letter. The parliament usurps the president's power of pardon, and the president usurps the parliament's power to confirm high officials. Both ignore the constitution's guarantees on freedom of the press. But nobody appeals to the Constitutional Court: a year after the new constitution took effect, the court still does not have enough judges to function.

When their government is dysfunctional, civilized men turn more than ever to voluntary associations of the sort famously described by Tocqueville. But most men do not live in countries where, for example, the very word "charity" (*"blagotvoritelnost"*) was suppressed until the 1980's. Western groups seeking to distribute food and medicine through the Russian Orthodox Church were recently told by some of its own bishops that the church lacks the experience and networks needed to deliver humanitarian relief. Instead, the bishops advised the Western visitors to give their donations to state agencies! But in spite of such setbacks, Russians are slowly rebuilding a nonstatist culture from the bottom up.

Three blocks from the Kremlin, next to the favorite restaurant of Stalin's secret police chief Lavrenty Beria, stands the Church of Saints Cosmas and Damian—now girdled in scaffolding as repairmen make up for six decades of neglect. Orthodox services took place at this site continuously from the 14th century until 1929, when the state seized the building and suppressed the parish. Worship resumed only in May 1991, and at first only in a small room on the second floor: the nave was still occupied by a Communist Party printing press. After the August 1991 coup, the newly reborn parish could easily have expelled the printers and left them jobless. Instead, Father Aleksandr Borisov told his flock that they should let the printers stay until they could find another location in which to continue as a for-profit business.

In the tradition of the third-century Roman doctors whose names their church bears, the members of Cosmas and Damian take a special interest in the seriously ill. They have adopted a children's hospital, and consequently suffer a 1990's Russian paradox: as a specialized institution with a nationwide reputation, it now gets *less* state funding than neighborhood Moscow hospitals. Moscow is an island of prosperity compared with most of Russia, and its politicians are increasingly reluctant to help hospitals with non-Moscow patients.

When you first set foot in the Children's Clinical All-Republican Hospital, the ratio of adults to children seems normal. But you soon learn that most of these adults are not doctors or nurses, but the mothers of patients. So many nurses have left their jobs—and so many of the mothers are from remote provinces and have no other place to stay in Moscow—that the mothers have simply moved in, becoming full-time unpaid staffers. It is increasingly the mothers who cook and serve the patients' meals, keep them entertained, and even take custody of the blood donated by volunteers responding to the Cosmas and Damian blood drive. In the rubble of statism, they are building their own community.

Cosmas and Damian also sponsor the Father Aleksandr Men Open Orthodox University, named in honor of a renowned Orthodox priest who was mysteriously murdered in 1990. In the tradition of its namesake, a convert from Judaism, the university teaches about Orthodoxy not as a privileged possession of Russians but as a universal religion. It is one of 167 private institutions of higher education born in Russia in the 1990's—an astonishing figure for a nation in a deep economic crisis and with virtually no previous tradition of independent schooling.

The healthiest institutions and personalities in Russia today are those which are the most remote from politics and power. Virtually the entire elite class still consists of people who were Communist Party members in good standing a decade ago; even the business world consists mostly of ex-apparatchiks who have learned how to convert political into financial clout. Though many of these have become sincere advocates of the free market, they are still shaped by the apparatchik legacy—obsession with economic policy, indifference to Russia's spiritual traditions, and hostility to rural and peasant life. (Hence their dislike of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn.) While today's "new Russians" are knocking at the doors of the International Monetary Fund and New York-style discotheques, Russia's real revival will be taking place elsewhere.

*Lawrence A. Uzzell is vice president and director of the Moscow office of the Jamestown Foundation, a foreign policy research institute based in Washington, D.C.*



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ETHICS

# Peddlers of Virtue

*by Theodore Pappas*

The recent controversy involving Olympic diving star Greg Louganis highlights more than the moral degeneracy of the latest poster boy for AIDS. When Louganis hit his head on the diving board and bled into the pool at the 1988 Olympics, the only honorable and morally just thing for him to do was to notify all concerned that he was HIV-positive. Instead, he chose to think only of himself, to save himself the embarrassment of revealing his dark secret, and to hide the truth about his medical state from both his fellow competitors and the doctor who treated his bloody wound without the protection of gloves.

The party line on this story, from the Establishment press, the medical community, and the Olympic hierarchy, was as predictable as the Speedo queen's sexual orientation. High and low did Olympic minions search for a rule that would have required Louganis to disclose his affliction, and having found none all sighed in collective relief and declared triumphantly: "He did nothing wrong." In fact, not only did "he do nothing wrong," but for jeopardizing the lives of dozens of people he became a man of "courage" and "conviction," the successor to Magic Johnson as the latest athlete to become a national hero as a result of acquiring a sexually transmitted disease.

Of course, what Louganis's many defenders actually mean by "he did nothing wrong" is that "he broke no law," and in the difference between the two—nay, in the deliberate distortion of the two, in the ascendancy of illicity as the barometer of iniquity—lies a story about the state of contemporary ethics.

Once upon a time man was not the measure of all things, and morality, virtue, and acceptable behavior were judged by standards that transcended the ephemera of time and circumstance. Recent history, however, teaches a different lesson, and if we have learned nothing else from the general knavery of our leadership class, from the rogues and scoundrels of United Way and the NAACP, from the "public servants" who brought us ABSCAM, Contragate, Whitewater, and the endless Bimbogates of the current administration, it is that contemporary ethics are grounded in the here and now, in secular law. In assessing both public and private conduct today, the foremost concern is no longer whether the deed or intent was right or wrong, ignoble or just, but whether the behavior in question was strictly illegal or in violation of a bureaucratic code or organizational statute. As influence-peddler Michael Deaver explained in exculpation of his actions, what he did may have been unethical, but at least it wasn't illegal.

In healthier days, we turned to parents and clergy, literature and liturgy, for help in maneuvering with dignity through that labyrinth of temptation called everyday life. Whether Christian or pagan, we realized that a person's behavior had more to do with his character than with his collection of sheep skins, and that we could not buy better morals from a peddler of virtue—whether Sophist, college professor, or "ethics facilitator"—as we do fruit and vegetables at a country market. But the notion that moral turpitude might be tied more to character development than the forces of environment, education, or economics is not only irrelevant in our post-Christian age, but irreverent: it delegitimizes the entire multimillion-dollar industry that our crisis in conscience has spawned. Law schools, medical schools, and business schools are today replete with required classes in ethics, and municipal governments, local school boards, federal agencies, and corporations now routinely have paid ethicists on staff or hold periodic seminars conducted by "ethics specialists." As the gurus of fad diets and gut-busters well know, only reform and redemption sell better than sin.

Among the most nationally famous of these professional Elmer Gantrys are Charles "Chuck" Colson and Jeb Stuart Magruder, now both ordained ministers. Though few people question the sincerity of these gentlemen's ministries, it is nevertheless a telling sign of the times when for moral guidance we now turn to the bunglers of Watergate. But it may well be the checkered pasts of such "experts" that prove most instructive. For they remind us of the question posed by Juvenal—*Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?*—about who will watch the


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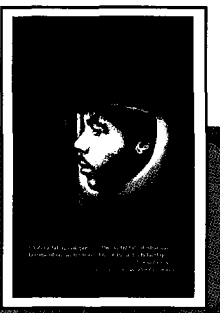

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watchmen, about the character of the men whom we rely on for instruction. It is this very question that comes to mind when considering the recent controversies involving Bill Bennett, undoubtedly the most popular peddler of virtue today.

The first controversy involves Bennett's prepared remarks this January before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior and Related Matters. Bennett appeared on Capitol Hill to call for the abolishment of the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities, the latter of which he directed in the 1980's. As Al Kamen of the *Washington Post* reported, Bennett recounted the difficulties he experienced at NEH in trying to establish a program that would promote traditional works of philosophy. "By the third year," Bennett said:

> it was obvious that this program was going the way of all the others. The books were being Marxized, feminized, deconstructed and politicized. High-school teachers, far from being exposed to 'the best which has been taught and said in the world,' were being indoctrinated in the prevailing dogmas of academia.

According to Kamen, this passage "tracks" the remarks that historian Gertrude Himmelfarb made in an October article in *Commentary*. "Track," of course, is one of the many kind and gentle euphemisms for plagiarism, and this portion of Bennett's statement was a verbatim excerpt from Professor Himmelfarb's essay.

Bennett apparently had never seen the article in *Commentary*. As he later explained, Professor Himmelfarb had included this passage in a statement that she had intended to read before the same House committee. When she, Mrs. Kristol, decided not to appear, she reportedly "gave me [Bennett] her testimony and told me to use it as I saw fit . . . and she asked me not to cite it." Use it, Bennett did; cite it, he did not. "Is originality one of the virtues in the 'Book of Virtues'?" asked Kamen.

The second controversy involves Bennett's best-seller, *The Book of Virtues*. As the *New Yorker* reported in February, Bennett is really not the author of this book of moral tales: this honor goes to John Cribb, who was a speechwriter for Bennett when the latter was Secretary of Education. According to the *New Yorker*, Bennett had Cribb working tirelessly on the book, but without remuneration:

> Not to put too fine a point on it, [Bennett] was suffering from a small cash-flow embarrassment: he had long ago spent the advance on his two-book deal with Simon & Schuster. Being a great man, though, William had an idea: if John would stick with the project for a year, William would give John about a third of any profits that the resulting *Book of Virtues* earned. . . . [T]he noble (indeed, the downright virtuous) William kept his promise. At thirty dollars per book, and if Bennett is receiving in royalties the fifteen percent that is standard in publishing, John's piece of the action would appear to have netted the once unassuming ghost-scribe well over two million dollars.

With the book already in its 34th printing, and with the foreign language royalties and subsidiary rights assuring a constant flow of profits for many years to come, it is safe to assume that never again will Cribb and Bennett suffer a "cash-flow embarrassment." As Bennett puts it, "Let's just say we're both happy about this. I'm happy and John's happy. John's *really* happy."

Both controversies involving Bennett share a certain moral obtuseness. Like Greg Louganis's situation, not only did Mr. Bennett have information he preferred to keep out of the public domain, albeit information of less social significance than Louganis's, but no law required Bennett to disclose his information, either about the true source of his public testimony or the true author of his book. In fact, regarding his testimony on Capitol Hill, Bennett was not legally guilty of plagiarism, as Professor Himmelfarb had reportedly given him permission to use her work. But permission doth not a virtuous act make. An adulteress may encourage a paramour and thereby grant "permission" to assist in the adultery, but a man of virtue would resist the temptress nonetheless. Nor would a man of integrity willingly deceive others by putting off the work of others as one's own and then later declare, when tripped up in the deception, "I was told I could do it."

Neither would a man of virtue, particularly one widely regarded as a scholar and man of letters, mislead the public as to the true author of a book that has brought him such astounding fame and fortune. Now, ghostwriting is an age-old method of publishing for the rich and untalented, and without it America would never have had a Pulitzer Prize-winning "author" become President. But few political and cultural leaders have ever had a ghostwritten book as wildly popular and profitable as Bill Bennett's, and when the topic of the best-seller is honesty and forthrightness, morality and virtue, one naturally begins to wonder about the credibility of its "author."

Again, no law required Bennett to reveal the actual extent of Cribb's "assistance," but the honorable act would not have been to bury mention of Cribb in a foreword to the book, but to have listed Cribb, at the very least, as coauthor or coeditor. Even Hollywood tarts and monosyllabic sport stars have perfected a more honest method of "writing" than that exhibited by Bennett. Their autobiographies do often fall short on the *auto* end of things, but at least they come clean with the public on the covers of their books: *My Life* by Mike Tyson, "Written in crayon with the assistance of . . ."

Perhaps these controversies involving Mr. Bennett are not so much evidence of deceit and deception as proof of a penchant for doing the bare minimum. After all, Bennett's dissertation entitled "Societal Obligation," for which he received a Ph.D. from the University of Texas at Austin in 1970, was hardly longer than many master's theses. Its text, including introduction, summary, and conclusion, is only 129 pages. His bibliography, in which he cites numerous secondary sources as well as his use of the *New York Times Encyclopedia Almanac*, extends only two lines beyond a single page. In fact, his biography of himself in his "Vita" encompasses 20 lines, which is more than the 13 total works listed in his bibliography.

The text of his dissertation is no more impressive. The chapters are largely recapitulations of the ideas of prominent moral philosophers. He begins with a summary of H. A. Prichard's *Moral Obligation*, and the first 12 footnotes are citations from different chapters of Prichard's book. He later summarizes W. D. Ross's *The Right and the Good*



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(from which he pulls eight consecutive quotations) and an article by William K. Frankena. Much the same occurs in Chapter Two, where 45 of the 48 footnotes derive from a *single* source, Lon Fuller and Robert Braucher's *Basic Contract Law*. Chapter Three has eight footnotes, in one of which Bennett asserts that what "has not received much attention in contemporary thinking is Rousseau's theory [of social contract]"! In Chapter Four he summarizes Socrates and quotes extensively from the works of Plato, using the editions translated by . . . Edith Hamilton. Chapter Five consists of his summary (of his summaries) and conclusions from his summaries.

Some parts of Bennett's thesis seem like nothing more than an elaboration on Frankena's article. As indicated in its title, "Obligation and Motivation in Recent Moral Philosophy," Frankena's essay deals with the very subject of Bennett's dissertation. In fact, Frankena discusses the work of both Prichard and Ross and then concludes that their philosophies are too narrowly defined. This just happens to be Bennett's conclusion, and throughout his dissertation, from start to finish, one finds a simple reiteration of Frankena's arguments: "As Frankena recommends . . . "; "[The thesis will] broaden the boundaries of the inquiry in a way recommended by Frankena . . . "; " . . . as Frankena would recommend . . ."; "We have taken Frankena's advice and . . . " ; "Again we could say with Frankena . . . " The dissertation ends up reading more like an undergraduate term paper than an original work of scholarship.

That a project so lean in size and substance could qualify as a dissertation should perhaps not surprise us. One of the advisors who signed and approved his thesis was John Silber, the president of the institution that so botched the investigation of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s plagiarized dissertation, Boston University. (Silber, by the way, has just anointed his successor at B.U.: it's Jon Westling, who in 1990 said in a letter to *Chronicles* about King's bogus B.U. thesis that "not a single reader has ever found any nonattributed or misattributed quotations, misleading paraphrases, or thoughts borrowed without due scholarly reference in any of its 343 pages.")

Perhaps the most interesting part of Bennett's dissertation is its epigraph. "Boys, a gentleman always rises when a lady enters a room. He must. A gentleman keeps his obligations, even in Hell." This is certainly true, but in light of Bennett's recent chicanery, one is reminded instead of the "infallible rule" of R. S. Surtees, that "the man who is always talking about being a gentleman never is one." The question is whether the same holds true for declaimers of virtue.

*Theodore Pappas is the managing editor of* Chronicles.

## FILM

# Littler Women

*by Laurie Morrow*

**Little Women**
*Produced by Denise DiNovi*
*Directed by Gillian Armstrong*
*Based on the book by Louisa May Alcott*
*Screenplay by Robin Swicord*
*Released by Columbia Pictures*

As the recent effort to remake *Little Women* suggests, Hollywood has remembered that an almost certain way to make a profitable film is to turn a best-selling children's classic into a movie. After all, when Hollywood makes family films, entire families buy tickets, as well as popcorn, sodas, and candy, and replacements for what the kids spill, devour, or quarrel over while the movie's running. Unlike artsy-grotesque films, movies which appeal to families also enjoy profits from movie tie-in products (try marketing a Hannibal Lecter Happy Meal). Among Hollywood's oldest traditions is modifying these classics to insure good box office sales. A 1930's version of *Moby Dick*, for example, has Ahab saved by the love of a good woman; and when discussing the casting of apostles for a film version of *The Last Supper*, Samuel Goldwyn is said to have exclaimed, "Why only twelve?—Go out and get *thousands*!" In the past, moviemakers modified stories to make them more entertaining; now, however, they modify plot and characterization for political purposes.

Hollywood still does not quite grasp what it is about literary classics that attracts the general public. The film industry regards these stories, whose appeal extends across generations and geography, not as fully articulated works of art which express a coherent vision but as loose scenarios into which stars can be plugged and through which they can articulate their fashionable politics.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in Columbia Pictures' recent reinvention of Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*. Alcott's 1868 novel teaches a number of important moral lessons, most of which Columbia Pictures hurls overhand out the window. This is a pity, as *Little Women* offers a feminist view of life—an unfashionable feminism, admittedly, one grounded in self-reliance, endurance, and commitment rather than in a politically correct scramble for "privileged victim" status. Their "self-esteem" firmly intact, Alcott's young women are less apt to remind us of Gloria Steinem than of Katharine Hepburn, who, in 1933, starred in George Cukor's more faithful interpretation of the novel. Alcott demonstrates that a woman can choose the kind of life she wishes to lead, provided she recognize and emend her character flaws and not compromise her ideals.

*Little Women* was, after all, intended to be edifying as well as entertaining: John Bunyan's religious allegory *Pilgrim's Progress* provides the novel's structural framework as well as the source for several chapters' titles and themes (e.g., "Playing Pilgrims," "Meg Goes to Vanity Fair"). Good minister's daughter that she was, Alcott created four recognizable types of young women, each of whom must overcome some weakness in her character in order to move from childhood to maturity. Meg is responsible but proud; Jo, talented but stubborn; Beth, sensitive but overly shy; and Amy, charming but vain. Each endures many tests of character, including financial problems, conflicts with family, friends, and lovers, and the illnesses and deaths of loved ones. Ultimately, though each retains her essential nature, the four "little women" become responsible, mature adults through self-discipline, hard work, and mutual devotion. Most importantly, Jo, the focal point of the action, refuses to marry until she finds a man who takes her intellectual and artistic aspirations seriously.

Now, this may seem a sturdy enough



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little story just as it is. But Columbia Pictures does not approve of the lessons Alcott's novel teaches. The religious elements are attenuated beyond recognition, with Alcott's lessons about faith and morality replaced with anachronistic diatribes on the inequity of the sexes. Even the female casting choices undermine Alcott's original purpose: the robust Claire Danes, for example, plays the fragile Beth. Danes struggles to conceal her athletic build by stooping while she lopes through the picture, until, mercifully, her pink eyeshadow deepening conspicuously as she nears her final moments, she expires.

More troubling, however, is the casting of Gabriel Byrne (whom Ken Russell cast as Byron in *Gothic*) as Professor Bhaer. Though a talented actor, Byrne is considerably younger and sexier than Alcott's original. Alcott sharply differentiates Jo's two suitors to call attention to the reasons behind Jo's choosing Professor Bhaer for a husband. The other suitor, Laurie, is an adolescent girl's fantasy beau—in addition to being young, handsome, rich, amusing, and from a socially prominent family, he is kind and thoughtful and is sincerely fond of Jo and her family. The average 14-year-old is horrified when Jo ends up marrying Professor Bhaer, a recent immigrant who, though also kind and thoughtful, is middle-aged, poor, pudgy, and socially awkward.

Long before she meets Bhaer, even before she embarks on her career in journalism, Jo deliberately terminates her romantic relationship with Laurie before it progresses beyond mild flirtation. Jo knows that she and Laurie are ill-suited for each other as marriage partners: passionate, headstrong people, each needs a spouse who will complement, not duplicate, his character—someone "steady," as they used to say.

Unfortunately, "steadiness" is not a virtue much beloved of Hollywood these days. It would have been a considerable challenge for screenwriter Robin Swicord to show why Jo prefers a man who, though poor and middle-aged, takes her intellectual and artistic aspirations seriously to a man who, though handsome, wealthy, and kind, is unable to provide her with the intellectual companionship she desires. Instead, Hollywood blanches when Professor Bhaer criticizes Jo's writing. Neither Jo's family nor Laurie has ever seen Jo's lurid melodramas as anything but ripping good tales which handily pay the bills. Professor Bhaer, however, recognizes her talent, and gently tells her she is wasting it. At Jo's urging, he politely but acutely criticizes her writing. Jo's welcoming of his astute criticism helps her to mature.

Many self-proclaimed feminists, however, equate being "taken seriously" with being praised, not criticized, especially by men. Unaware of the irony of her position, *New York Times* film critic Caryn James deems it disrespectful of "the bearish Professor Bhaer" to tell Jo that she should be a great writer rather than a tabloid hack: "[He] scolded her for writing sensational stories; then she married him anyway." Ms. James just doesn't get it: Jo marries Bhaer not *in spite of* his criticism of her writing but *because* of it. Indeed, Bhaer is among the strongest feminists in the novel: though a professor from Germany—the intellectual center of 19th-century Europe—he recognizes artistic potential in a young woman with little formal education.

Sadly, this movie dismisses Alcott's message that someone who is not "young and sexy" can nevertheless be desirable, and that intellectual companionship with someone who challenges you to make the best of yourself is essential in a mate. Such, at least, are the values Alcott's novel presents, and such are the values of those of us who love *Little Women* just as it is.

The filmmakers' antimale bias becomes especially apparent when we compare the male characters in the two versions of *Little Women*: whereas Alcott's portraits of even the minor male characters are complex and subtle, the men in the movie are mere caricatures. Consider, for example, the film's treatment of Mr. Davis, the teacher who strikes Amy's hand with a wooden rod for bringing pickled limes (a status symbol) to class. Amy tells her mother that Mr. Davis said it was "as useful to educate a woman as it is to educate a female cat." The outraged Marmee condemns his sadistic sexism—"By law Mr. Davis may beat his pupils freely—as well as his children and his wife and his horse," and withdraws Amy from the school for his "brutal punishment."

Alcott's original narrative is, however, considerably more complex: Amy is not a blameless victim, nor Mr. Davis a sexist ogre. Alcott's Mr. Davis is a "much-enduring man" who had "done all that one man could do to keep half a hundred rebellious girls in order." Though Alcott criticizes Mr. Davis's bad temper, she sympathizes with the challenge he faces of controlling a classful of adolescent girls: "Boys are trying enough to human patience . . . but girls are infinitely more so, especially to nervous gentlemen with tyrannical tempers." Alcott's Amy is also presented as more culpable than her twin in the film: she compounds her fault by trying to conceal some of the forbidden fruit after she has been ordered to discard it. Amy's vanity prompted her to assume that the rules just would not be applied to her and that her mother would offer her unqualified sympathy (which the film Amy gets). Kindly but firmly, Alcott's Marmee informs Amy that she deserved punishment for knowingly breaking the rules; though Marmee disapproves of corporal punishment, she ventures that, in this case, "I'm not sure that it won't do you more good than a milder method." Marmee removes Amy from the school, not simply because she disapproves of Mr. Davis's teaching methods, but also because Amy's female friends are encouraging her to develop poor values.

Or consider the treatment of Dr. Bangs, old Mr. Laurence's personal physician, whom he sends to tend the ailing Beth. Fearing Beth may die despite his best efforts, Dr. Bangs suggests that Marmee be sent for. Rather than be grateful for Dr. Bangs' assistance, however, the movie's Marmee bursts into Beth's bedroom, certain her daughter has received inadequate treatment. "Dr. Mom" declares that Beth's feet have not been kept properly warm, and, with a woman's instinctive understanding of folk medicine, calls for vinegar to "draw the fever down." Once again, the male professional is incompetent and insensitive, the female amateur omnicompetent and omnicaring.

Nor do the other male characters fare better. Alcott's crusty but charming old Mr. Laurence virtually disappears, as does the father of the little women, Mr.

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March. (So insignificant is Mr. March that one reviewer referred to the family as a "single-parent household"). Other male characters violate the conventions of polite behavior, at least by 19th-century standards: as if they were cohabiting, Bhaer enters Jo's bedroom without knocking, kissing her familiarly on the back of her neck.

Even Laurie (peculiarly called "Teddy," which he rarely is in the book) does not escape feminist revision. His first gaze at the girls is salacious, and he professes interest first in Meg, then in Jo, and then in Amy, without ever making the reasons for these changes in his affections clear; one expects Marmee is next in his apparent determination to wed a March girl, *any* March girl. While in Europe, Laurie is reduced to a level of degradation undreamt of by Alcott: he swills liquor from a flask and associates with women of ill repute (as the bare legs of his overdressed companion suggest).

In an act of ultimate absurdity, children's writer Laurie Lawlor has produced a novelization of Robin Swicord's tin-eared screenplay of Alcott's novel. Apparently, Columbia Pictures sees nothing peculiar about novelizing a novel, nor anything wrong with revising one woman's vision to advance another's political agenda. Only 133 large-type pages (in contrast to the 449 small-type pages of the unabridged Signet Classic), Lawlor's dreary little polemic lacks Alcott's style but maintains Swicord's shrillness. It is, if anything, a parody of Alcott. Like the pre-Bhaer Jo, Lawlor is wasting her talent by pandering to her least informed readers' prejudices.

By reducing the roles of Alcott's men while artificially inflating the roles of the women, both movie and novelization attempt to bring Alcott's characters into accord with politically correct feminism. What are produced, however, are shallow caricatures rather than complex human beings, for diminishing the male characters diminishes, correspondingly, the female characters. Concerned about the unwillingness of men to attend this movie, director Gillian Armstrong mused, "We could change the title."

Perhaps Columbia Pictures should have changed the title to something more appropriate—*Littler Women.*

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POP CULTURE

# Mailer on Madonna

*by John Lofton*

Years ago, in an article he wrote for the *New Yorker* titled "My Philosophy," in a section subheadlined "Eschatological Dialects as a Means of Coping with Singles," Woody Allen wrote: "We can say that the universe consists of a substance, and this substance we will call 'atoms,' or else we will call it 'monads.' Democritus called it atoms, Leibniz called it monads. Fortunately, the two men never met, or there would have been a very dull argument."

Well, Democritus has, alas, finally met Leibniz, sort of. Norman Mailer has interviewed Madonna. He talked about this talk on national TV. And it was indeed *very* dull. In fact, what H.L. Mencken once said about Thorstein Veblen can also be said about Mailer blabbing mindlessly about Madonna, the "most famous woman in the world," if we can believe the recent television movie about her life: he does indeed have unprecedented talent for saying nothing in an august and heroic manner.

When asked on *Good Morning America* why we should find Madonna fascinating, Mailer said: "I respect her because she's not predictable. She's one of the few artists we've had in America who is not predictable."

Get serious, please! Whatever Madonna does, she is totally predictable. And what's totally predictable is that she will do whatever a slut does. The woman is predictably vile.

Mailer: "What she does is always interesting and very severe. She's got severe talent."

Always interesting? I don't think so—unless you're a sex pervert and a voyeur. Severe? Again, not the best word to describe this wretch, since my dictionary, the last one I trust—Noah Webster's 1828 *American Dictionary of the English Language*—defines "severe" as "not . . . indulgent . . . sometimes perhaps, unreasonably strict or exact; giving no indulgence to faults or errors . . . sober, sedate to an extreme . . . not lax or airy . . . nice."

Mailer: "She's not giving it [her 'severe talent'] to us for too little."

True. It costs a lot of money to attend Madonna concerts. And her pornographic books are insanely expensive.

Mailer: "In other words, what she's saying, what she's always saying, which the others don't do, is that life is very difficult."

Gosh.

Mailer: "[What she's saying is that] there are extraordinary elements, there are profound contradictions, that we don't know our own natures and we have to search for them."

On the contrary, what Madonna proves is that John Calvin was right when he said our human natures are totally depraved until we are born again, made good by God. Indeed, Madonna proves that, if anything, Calvin understated the depravity of human nature.

A little later, Mailer says with a straight face that Madonna has tried to "fill the void" that Andy Warhol merely catered to. He says: "She has this feeling—when I speak of the void what I mean is that everybody has—you remember when Jimmy Carter made that speech about American malaise. And we're beginning to feel it now, that there's something wrong that we all feel, that there's something wrong with American life. It's not what it used to be. There isn't that certainty we all used to have. We used to have a feeling 30, 40, 50 years ago that this is a great country and we're gonna do marvelous things and now that confidence is no longer there. And that's what I call the void: this empty feeling inside that things are not right and not going well."

Ah, yes, malaise. I know the feeling well. In fact, I felt it at the precise moment I listened to Mailer blather on about Madonna. And yes, there is something wrong with American life. Proof of this fact is that Madonna is such a celebrity in our country, which, contrasted with 30, 40, or 50 years ago, is not great. If we *were* great today, no one would have ever heard of Madonna. She would have been deported years ago.

Mailer (for this one you should be seated): "Madonna is trying to find out what the nature of truth is. That's why I think she's a great artist."

Madonna searching for truth? Madonna a "great artist"? Sure, like



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Nero, who said when he committed suicide: "What an artist dies in me."

When Mailer hears that some people think Madonna is profane—you know, doing what she does with the name "Madonna"—he says: "Well, what can I say? She's daring and she's Catholic herself. So, she knows the price she's paying if she's wrong. She really has a kind of spiritual courage that is not small. She knows what the stakes are. I never met a Catholic who didn't know what the stakes were."

Madonna a Catholic? Perhaps, but in the same way in which Adolf Hitler was a Catholic. It was, after all, none other than Madonna who once said that she wears a crucifix because she thinks it's "sexy" to wear "a naked man."

Mailer: "And so, in that sense, the chances she takes are not small chances. And one reason I respect her is because she's transcended her talent. Her talent is good. But she has a touch of genius in the chances she takes, the way she brings them off, which makes her talent larger."

Well, yes, Madonna has "transcended" her talent with a vengeance, as has Mailer. This is known as the "Peter Principle." Dr. Laurence J. Peter wrote about it years ago in a best-selling book of the same name: "In a hierarchy every employee tends to rise to the level of his incompetence."

It is appropriate that Norman Mailer should be ga-ga over Madonna, since Mailer's own lifestyle has been rather—how shall I put it—eccentric, as reported by Hilary Mills in her book *Mailer: A Biography*. First, there is Mailer's stabbing of his wife Adele, at a party at his apartment in November 1960, where he informally announced his candidacy for mayor of New York City. As Mills recounts, "Only a handful of people were left by 4:30 A.M. when a very drunk Mailer walked in from the street with a black eye, a torn lip, and blood all over his fancy bullfighter's shirt. Adele took one look at him and spoke sharply. The accounts of her comment vary. George Plimpton was told that she said the equivalent of 'You look like you've been rolled by a couple of sailors in the back streets.' Others remember it as 'You look like a woman with lipstick on your mouth.' Mailer then took out a two-and-a-half inch penknife and went at his wife, stabbing her in the upper abdomen and back. One wound was later described as three inches deep and three-quarters of an inch wide, a 'thrust near the heart.'"

While Adele and a Detective Burns engaged in a post-stabbing discussion, Mailer taped "a bizarre television interview with Mike Wallace in which he described the knife as an instrument of manhood." Discussing what was then known as "juvenile delinquency," Mailer rejected the idea of disarming young hoodlums: "The knife to a juvenile delinquent is very meaningful. You see, it's his sword—his manhood." A better solution, Mailer suggested, would be to hold annual gangland jousting tournaments in Central Park, "which would bring back the Middle Ages."

To keep a long story short, Mailer finally pleaded guilty to third-degree assault. Almost a year after the stabbing, he received a suspended sentence with a probation period not to exceed three years. A 1962 book by Mailer, *Deaths for the Ladies and Other Disasters*, contained this "poem":

So long
as
you
use
a knife,
there's
some
love
left.

Eighteen years after he stabbed his wife, Mailer declared: "A decade's anger made me do it. After that, I felt better." Mailer has also played what Mills calls "matrimonial musical chairs," marrying at least six women.

Then there is Mailer's friendship with a criminal pen pal named Jack Henry Abbott, whom he helped get released from the Utah State Prison and who subsequently stabbed and killed a waiter, Richard Adan, on July 18, 1981. At a press conference, Mailer said of Abbott: "I certainly have the strongest feelings and hopes that Abbott will not get the maximum sentence. Abbott is a very complex man with great gifts. . . . It's far too easy to send him away forever." Noting that Abbott did not benefit from what he did, Mailer said: "The only people who have gotten anything from this whole mess are the ones who are calling for more law and order, and more law and order means moving this country toward a fascist state." When asked if it wasn't a gamble to let Abbott out of jail, Mailer replied: "I'm willing to gamble with a portion of society to save this man's talent. I am saying that culture is worth a little risk. That's what I've been saying over and over for 30 years."

Mailer also helped "yippie" anarchist Abbie Hoffman by serving as the head of his defense fund when Hoffman surfaced after years as a fugitive from a cocaine charge. Not surprisingly, Hoffman, who committed suicide, says the "most influential essay" in his own wretched life was Mailer's "The White Negro," in which Mailer argues that it would take a certain amount of "courage" for "two strong 18-year-old hoodlums to beat in the brains of a candy-store keeper" because this would mean "daring the unknown." Hoffman first encountered Mailer at a lecture at Brandeis University in 1959. "Exhorting the crowd to fan out from the hallowed grounds of academy, [Mailer] predicted a New Age would be born in the gutters and back streets of America's bohemian underworld."

In Mexico, Mailer sought a "spiritual refuge" in marijuana, supposedly finding God while high. Pot, he says, "gave me a sense of something new about the time I was convinced I had seen it all." Also, while in Mexico, Mailer met an ex-prisoner who had just been in jail for killing his wife. The man who brought Mailer and this jailbird together says: "Norman became terribly fascinated with this guy and spent a good deal of the evening asking him, 'How did it feel? What was the exact reaction you had just before you pulled the trigger?'" Mailer later wrote of his time in Mexico: "I was finally open to my anger. I turned within my psyche I can almost believe, for I felt something shift to murder in me. . . . All I felt then was that I was an outlaw, a psychic outlaw, and I liked it."

Mailer says he was introduced to the concepts of "karma" and "reincarnation" in 1953 and agreed that these things "make sense." While in Zaire, Mailer began reading "Bantu Philosophy" and discovered that "the instinctive philosophy of African tribesmen happened to be closest to his own. Bantu philosophy, he soon learned, saw humans as forces, not beings . . . a man was not only himself, but the karma of all generations past that still lived in him." When Mailer interviewed Jimmy Carter in 1976, he asked Carter "if he had any belief in reincarnation, in the reincarnation of karma as our purgatory here on



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earth." "Carter could only smile wanly."

Once, when a Hollywood director asked Mailer to write a screenplay for Humphrey Bogart, Mailer refused. Why? "He was always turning down things," said one of Mailer's wives. "He always felt he would compromise himself. He was so puritanical [!] that he wouldn't even do a radio talk show with some actress because he would have to say 'Drink Pepsi Cola.' His integrity was almost pathological." After stabbing his wife, Mailer told a magistrate that it was important for him not to be sent to a mental hospital "because my work in the future will be considered that of a disordered mind. My pride is that I can explore areas of experience that other men are afraid of. I insist that I am sane."

Mills quotes Mailer as saying: "The devil in me loves the idea of being just that much of a changeling. You can never understand a writer until you find his private little vanity and mine has always been that I will frustrate expectations. People think they've found a way of dismissing me, but, like the mad butler, I'll be back serving the meal."

And so Norman Mailer is. This "puritan," whose "integrity" is "almost pathological," this wife-stabber whose sanity is questionable precisely because he thinks he's "sane," now tries to serve us, of all people, Madonna. Oh, how right the Good Book is, specifically Proverbs 16:18: "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."

*John Lofton writes from Laurel, Maryland.*

# Susan Sontag

***by Geoffrey Wagner***

"Side by Side by Sontag" was the London *Observer*'s headline describing an evidently turbulent scene at the last Edinburgh Festival. The comedian Simon Fanshawe spotted a famous couple hobnobbing hard together—photographer Annie Leibovitz and her bosom buddy: "the great critic and writer Susan Sontag." As the *Observer*'s "Arts Diary" put it: "Unable to contain himself, Fanshawe leapt across to pay unadulterated homage to Leibovitz. The absurd compliments gushed forth until Fanshawe finally extracted himself with a brief nod in the aghast Sontag's direction." Reading this episode, a little bell tinkled in the mists of what memory my mind has left me.

Back in the early 60's, I was living in an old stone house in Corsica: more particularly in the remote northwestern enclave of La Balange. This was, and is, a mountainous area of goat and sheep farmers whose relatives drifted over from *le continent* of a summer to spend the day sipping local D'Amiani pastis on the squares of tiny villages skewered to the nearest mountainside by 17th-century church steeples, and to play *boule* in the cool of an evening.

These hill villages, climbing up to Corsica's glorious central massif of snow-capped mountains and dense fir forests, averaged about 300 somnolent inhabitants each. As Michelin still puts it: in winter, after the French *rentée des classes*, the population of the island is "*faible*." It consists, in short, of the very young and the very old; "touching" their pensions, the latter perch in their corduroys and cummerbunds around the fountains of this or that old square. Any sudden activity beyond the shooting of wild boar or Marseilles *maquereaux* (*viz.* pimps) appears undignified in this clubman's century-old preserve. The shepherds—or their sons and daughters—milk their flocks, placing their can roadside for pickup by the Roquefort van, to be aged in caves on *le continent* and sold to you and me as the celebrated cheese of that name.

Pleasantly little notice is taken of the outside world, which makes the island a refreshing retreat from the likes of Madonna. Tourism is minimal in these hill villages, being confined to the beach fringes, my nearest then being Ile-Rousse. It was much nicer than St. Tropez, and probably still is. Television has come but back then there was none, nor any cinema, and no indigenous newspaper. For the latter, *Nice-Matin* sent over an island edition called *Nice-Corse-Matin*. I suspect its circulation was in the low hundreds, aimed chiefly at local politicians or (as with us) gangsters.

Hence I was startled one morning to see a Honda *vélo* furrowing up through the heathery maquis in the general direction of my house. The occupant of what had once been the saddle turned out to be José Mattei (almost everyone in Corsica is called José Mattei), stringer for said *Nice-Corse-Matin* and an old friend; he appeared in a state of considerable, not to say unseemly, excitement.

"*Susan Sontag est ici*," he gasped.

I was baffled, and not merely by his pronunciation. I had never heard of the lady, if such she were, and I fear it was a common omission at the time. José needed an interpreter since she could not speak French, or what passed for it in Corsica. So I donned my duds and climbed on the back of my own dilapidated put-put for the 30-minute plunge down to Ile-Rousse, where I was introduced to a discontented, overweight woman with spanielly dewlap cheeks, her head encumbered by what the French call curlers, *bigoudis*—hers pink. She told me in peremptory fashion to fetch her bags from the port; apparently her escort, an equally sulky young man strung with cameras like hungry tongues, could not summon the energy. Perhaps he was Corsican.

I was thus privileged to spend the morning running errands for the future recipient of the McArthur Award, plus translating from excruciating French into demotic Corse; it was only much later that I learned of her linguistic ability, when she was touting for a Nobel an obscure *mittel*-European novel she could not possibly have read, since it was couched in a ruritanian subdialect accessible only to four or five American academics; compared with it, the winner's Icelandic poetry must have been kindergarten stuff for the explosive experts.

Sontag, it seemed, was merely passing through Napoleon's scented island, spending the night but making sure, like him, of *getting her publicity*. And so she did, as reported in the *Nice-Corse-Matin*, whose clip of her equine features I still treasure somewhere (she had not gotten into the white forelock in those days). Meanwhile, the sheer cheek (or *toupie*) of landing on our little backwater and treating it as a staging point for personal publicity simply beat the band. The idea of deluding a respectable *caf'-conc'* barfly like José, about five-two in height and ready with his knife, into taking you as an international celebrity had me chuckling all the way back to my mountainous aristocracy of bleating sheep and grunting boar. It still does. Well done, Susan Sontag!

*Geoffrey Wagner's latest book is a novel,* A Singular Passion. *He writes from Grenada.*



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## LANGUAGE

# *Faux Amis* in the Balkans

*by John Peter Maher*

Roy Gutman's *Witness to Genocide* raises the specter of Janet Cooke. Although the author of *Witness to Genocide*, the 1993 Pulitzer Prize-winning "dispatches" on the "ethnic cleansing" of Bosnia, speaks American English, from the many awkward phrases in "his" book one might infer that someone other than Mr. Gutman wrote at least parts of it.

Foreign language teachers have fun haranguing their pupils about those treacherous look-alike but mean-different words. The French call them "false friends," or *faux amis*. Take the word "preservative," for example. This refers to chemical additives that retard spoilage of foods. Elsewhere in Europe, "preservatives" are condoms. At table once in an Alpine village, I had to interpret for an American lady who had just nonplussed her Italian hosts with her recipe for homebaked bread. Meaning to say "I use only natural ingredients," she actually said "I never use preservatives."

Let us examine a few samples from Gutman's book.

Page xiii: "I learned this . . . on meeting released prisoners in Britain, some at *the Karlovac* in southern Croatia." This whole sentence, though grammatically correct, is wooden, foreigner's English. What is more, the use of the definite article is typically Slavic. (In the Slavic family, only Bulgarian and north Russian dialects have a definite article.) We say *The Hague*, yes, but not *the Washington* for the city, as opposed to an eponymous bar or ship; or we use the restrictive construction "this was not *the Washington that* I left in 1956."

Page xxxv: "*Tampered* elections . . ." The perfect participle of this verb is not used attributively, but predicatively. With apologies to those brought up to believe that prepositions are nothing to end a sentence with, our elections are not *tampered* but *tampered with*.

Page 20: " . . . two *armored tanks* crashed into the main square." The Italians and French would do this, too: *char armé* and *carro armato*. *Oklopno vozilo*. The idea of "armored vehicle" lurks behind this one. Serbo-Croatian has borrowed the German *krachen* (verb) and *Krach* (noun), which *do not* mean what they look like in English. Our *crash*, literally used, refers to a noisy collision of speeding vehicles or other objects, but in German a wall can fall *mit einem ein Krach* or "with a crash, bang." In English, those *tanks* would only have (noisily) crashed into each other in (not into) the square. Any tanks that Gutman saw would have *roared* into that square.

Page 30: "Watchmen" is used where *guards* would be proper. *Guards watch* the military perimeter, while *watch*men *guard* the factory at night.

Page 41: Men marched "*arm to arm*." An English speaker would have written *shoulder to shoulder*. "Arm to arm" is a look-alike, a *faux ami* of the Serbo-Croatian *rame uz rame*. *Rame* really translates as "shoulder." Mistranslation of the French would yield *elbow to elbow*, literally translating *coude à coude*. Moreover, this locution evokes the solidarity of veterans, for example, marching in a parade on Fifth Avenue or along the Champs Élysées.

Page 51: "*Genitals plucked out*." A speaker of idiomatic English knows that our *eyes* are plucked out, our *genitals* cut off.

Pages 55 and 57 (yes, twice): "His back was *blue and red* from the blows." English-speakers have backs that are beaten *black and blue*.

Page 72: "In front of my eyes," a literal translation of *pred mojim ocima*. In English, we use the archaic preposition *before* in the phrase "it happened before my very eyes," and in prose about concrete situations we prefer "in front of (the house)."

Page 74: "The soldiers . . . hung him by his *neck, legs and hands*," instead of *hands and feet* or *arms and legs*. Serbo-Croatian underspecifies the limbs. *Ruka* and *noga* are respectively "arm/hand" and "foot/leg." Serbo-Croatian speakers add specifying terms as needed.

Page 137: ". . . *hangars* where grain was stored." Grain is indeed warehoused in *hangari* in Yugoslavia. In English, of course, *hangars* are for airplanes.

Postscript: According to the Yugoslav press agency *Tanjug* (January 28, 1993), Bosnian Serb soldiers captured a British mercenary, Robert Allen Lofthouse, along with "his diary and other documents [which] indicate his connections with an American agent code named 2-IC. 2-IC's true identity is Roy Gutman, an undercover agent working as a *Newsday* correspondent. Until the mid-1980's, Gutman worked for the Reuters bureau in Warsaw." Is this official Serb propaganda or further confirmation that Roy Gutman is something other than a journalist?

*John Peter Maher is a translator and grammarian in Chicago.*

## SCIENCE

# *The Bell Curve* and Its Critics

*by Kevin Lamb*

Since its publication late last year, *The Bell Curve* by Charles Murray and the late Richard Herrnstein has encountered a barrage of criticism for emphasizing the societal implications of IQ differences. Some critics argue that the work rests upon "bogus" and "outdated" theories of intelligence. Others charge that the book promotes dubious scientific claims. One columnist has described the 850-page text as "racist drivel." Still other critics acknowledge its research findings yet dismiss the book as "politics disguised as science."

In the wake of this criticism, several fallacies about intelligence have surfaced in the media. These falsehoods play a pivotal role in the controversy that surrounds IQ research, and public reaction to *The Bell Curve* indicates the extent to which these fallacies dominate public opinion. Consider the responses from *Newsweek* readers to its October 24 cover story, "IQ: Is It Destiny?" Nearly one-third of 450 letters to the editor deplored the magazine's coverage of the issue.



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Reactions to the book center on three general myths about IQ: that there is no such thing as general intelligence, that IQ tests are worthless, and that genetics is insignificant when it comes to individual or group differences in intelligence. The source of these fallacies is the ideology of egalitarianism, not scientific precedent. Briefly, here is a closer look at these popular myths.

The first is the idea that "IQ" (general intelligence) is a discredited and scientifically invalid concept. William Raspberry, columnist for the *Washington Post*, argues this very point. He claims that Murray "has embraced . . . largely discredited views regarding the heritability, measurability and immutability of intelligence." What Raspberry means by this is not exactly clear, since he fails to explain why these concepts are invalid.

The lack of unanimity among experts does not mean that these ideas have been "discredited." In fact, the opposite appears to be true. The Snyderman and Rothman survey of experts from 1988 shows more agreement than disagreement over "heritability" and "measurability." The importance of measuring intelligence is also summarized by Morton Hunt in *The Story of Psychology*: "Whatever one calls them, and whatever one's stance on intelligence testing, the fact remains that mental measurement is useful, is beneficial to society . . . and remains one of psychology's major contributions to modern life in America and most other developed nations."

Another fallacy is that the influence of genetics on IQ is trivial and ambiguous. Critics like E.J. Dionne of the *Washington Post* question the scientific accuracy of "heritability estimates" of IQ. Dionne argues that such generalizations are unscientific because the "science of the matter is utterly crude." Initially, Darwin's theory of natural selection and Newtonian physics were just as "crude." The fact that heritability estimates are "crude" makes them neither insignificant nor unscientific.

The most reliable data from twin and adoption studies show that the range of genetic influence extends from nearly half (40 percent) to slightly more than three quarters (80 percent). Behavior geneticist Thomas J. Bouchard, director of the Minnesota Study of Twins, notes that "the evidence regarding genetic influence on intelligence, when viewed as a whole, overwhelmingly supports the conclusion that genetic factors are the single most important source of variation."

A third fallacy is that alternative theories of intelligence, notably Howard Gardner's concept of multiple intelligences (MI), refute the traditional notion of general intelligence (psychometric "g"). Gardner's research is often considered to be proof that a general factor of intelligence, or simply "g," is scientifically discredited. In fact, most experts on intelligence do not favor Gardner's MI theory. The consensus from a 1992 Dahlem workshop on behavior genetics shows that leading researchers accept "g" as a valid assessment of intelligence:

> Despite many twentieth-century efforts to identify independent dimensions of intellectual variation (e.g., by Thurstone, Guilford, Hudson, Gardner), g-factors continue to account for some 50 percent of the variance in matrices of correlations between abilities. Beyond g, other independent dimensions each typically account for less than 10 percent of the variance of abilities. From this perspective, g may be to cognitive psychology what carbon is to organic chemistry.

The Snyderman and Rothman survey also reveals that, among experts, "58 percent favor some form of a general intelligence solution, while 13 percent feel separate faculties are a superior description. Only 16 percent think the data are sufficiently ambiguous as not to favor either solution. Nonresponse rate was 13 percent."

One of the most exhaustive studies of human intelligence, John B. Carroll's *Human Cognitive Abilities*, reiterates the importance of general intelligence. Based on more than 60 years of research, his work reanalyzes 477 data sets compiled since the early days of IQ testing. Although Carroll recognizes a number of specialized abilities, he concludes that the evidence of a general factor among these cognitive abilities is indisputable.

Another widespread fallacy is that individual and ethnic differences in IQ are simply the result of socioeconomic conditions, which brings us to the most scrutinized parts of *The Bell Curve*: the two chapters and one appendix that explore race differences in mental ability. Herrnstein and Murray take a biosocial approach to this explosive issue, which is to say that while they affirm the role of environment, they also recognize the probable influence of genetics. While many critics question the work of researchers who explore genetic links to race differences—most notably studies by Arthur Jensen, Richard Lynn, and J. Philippe Rushton—few bother to point out that these three scholars lead highly respected careers within their own professions.

Contrary to recent allegations, Herrnstein and Murray examine the complex issue of ethnic differences with great care. Simply put, they conclude that the underlying sources of these differences remain obscure. By reviewing Jensen's "Spearman hypothesis" and Rushton's "differential K theory," they point to the *plausibility* of a genetic basis for race differences in IQ. Both Herrnstein and Murray believe that these theories remain to be proven, but doubt that racial disparities are strictly the result of racism, poverty, or oppression.

In a recent issue of the *Nation*, Northwestern University professor Adolph Reed, Jr., revives another myth: that Sir Cyril Burt, one of Britain's most distinguished psychologists, fabricated IQ data. Reed questions Bouchard's findings on identical twins by claiming that "[Bouchard] has found the same strikingly high correlations in IQ among his sample of supposedly real twins raised apart that Sir Cyril Burt found among the imaginary twins in his fraudulent 'research.'" If taken at face value, Reed's assertion disregards recent major developments in the Burt case. This episode illustrates why the crusade against IQ research is ideologically driven.

Perhaps Britain's most distinguished psychologist, Burt was accused of faking twin data a few years after his death in 1972. Since then, the incident has received an endless amount of media coverage. Two years ago, *Omni* magazine identified Burt as one of the top ten frauds in history. But this is only part of the story. A few years ago, two meticulously thorough studies by two British scholars found that the allegations against Burt were groundless and politically motivated. In separate published accounts, both authors concluded that the evidence was too flimsy to substantiate the charges against Burt. Even though these findings discredit Burt's



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detractors, the accusations continue to surface in the media as if they were irrefutably proven.

Few scholarly works have encountered the hostile scrutiny that has confronted *The Bell Curve*. Each sentence of every chapter as well as hundreds of endnotes, bibliographic entries, and even acknowledgments have been scoured for "tainted sources." The bulk of this criticism comes from egalitarian ideologues who refuse to accept any evidence showing that innate differences in mental ability contribute to human inequality.

As Michael Levin, professor of philosophy at City College of New York, points out, "You cannot loathe a man's advice because his motives are despicable, and despise his motives because his advice is loathsome." Indeed, if critics of *The Bell Curve* expect to be taken seriously, they will abandon the sophistry and ad hominem assaults that are incapable of refuting the book's principal arguments.

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## ENVIRONMENT

# Dissing the Eco-Paranoids

***by Jim Christie***

"There's a world of misery in every mouthful of meat," fumes the headline in an advertisement back in the September/October 1993 issue of *E*, "The Environmental Magazine." The ad continues: "The grain which fattens animals for our dinner tables is oft time 'appropriated' from the peoples of Third World countries; it enriches dictators while vast populations starve." Meat production also "destroys the environment, squanders dwindling water reserves, pollutes our rivers and lakes with toxic animal wastes, and is causing the destruction of rain forests." Now, aren't you glad the Coalition for Non-Violent Food enlightened you?

If you want to keep up on environmental issues and can do without hectoring advertisements, skip *E* and consider *Garbage* magazine, which no longer accepts advertising. In the spring 1994 issue, editor Patricia Poore says her magazine was never pressured by advertisers to toe a green line, but she acknowledges that "the changing definition of the 'green' marketplace and the pursuit of complete independence, [meaning] the freedom for editorial coverage to evolve without the pressure of serving a predetermined market," may be incompatible with eco-advertising. For instance, it is probably safe to assume that anyone who jumps at the sight of an *E* ad (in the January/February 1995 issue) built around the line, "Stop Sleeping on Beds Emitting Toxic Gases!" is of the "predetermined market" that wants its unquestioning green worldview stroked.

For *Garbage*, the issue of eco-advertising would most likely have resolved itself, as the magazine stands alone in the eco-press for its skepticism of many issues advanced by the environmental movement. A letter in its spring 1994 issue is a good example of how the environmental apparat regards this type of editorial policy. Melanie Duchin of the Greenpeace Ozone Campaign sarcastically writes, "Coming soon in *Garbage*: Dioxin: A Little Dab'll Do Ya, Defense of Clearcuts, and Nuclear Power: No Fatal Accidents Since Chernobyl."

*Garbage* sins in other ways as well. For example, it steers away from both right- or left-wing denunciations of science and has no time for eco-mysticism. An opinion piece in its spring 1994 issue begins, "One of the paradoxes of modern society is that technology allows many people to live in unprecedented comfort despite ignorance of the physical, chemical, and biological processes that support their lifestyles. Modern citizens thus have limited perspectives regarding the impacts of technology on human health, and *may be too easily swayed by arguments founded on romantic misconceptions of pre-industrial conditions*." (My emphasis.)

And what of the blind faith the environmental movement has in government regulation? In the same issue, writer Stephen Stuebner takes on the hallowed Environmental Protection Agency for its imperial swaggering in a small town. Entitled "Triumph, Idaho, to EPA: Don't Tread On Me," Steubner's article was summarized: "Local residents were distraught when the EPA designated their town a potential Superfund toxic waste site. But after studying the data they've concluded the area is safe—and it's Superfund that needs cleaning up."

Nor does *Garbage* buy into causes that most enviros would embrace. It once featured on its cover a shapely model in a swimsuit, which prompted one appreciative reader to write, "Personally, I never have understood how hairy legs and Birkenstocks help save the planet." Predictably, another reader reprimanded *Garbage*: "It is no longer acceptable in contemporary society to gratuitously expose a person's body. To do so is to objectify and hence demean the value and worth of the person as a whole."

Of course, sending eco-advertising to the dumpster, not following the herd of the environmental press, and offending the mullahs of green-think, has its price. *Garbage* now comes out quarterly, and its cover price is $9.95. Infrequent circulation and skyrocketing cover prices are usually kisses of death for periodicals.

But the continued success of magazines like *Garbage* is important if people drawn to environmentalism are to receive information free of both green mysticism and Luddite delusions. Poore implies what sort of environmentalists would love to see the magazine go under. "Despite the ravings of our more paranoid readers," she writes, "*Garbage* is not secretly financed by any industrial consortium."

For paranoiac ravings, look at *E*. Mixed in with its advertisements for water-efficient laundry machines, recycled paper goods, "socially responsible" mutual funds, and environmentally correct products—my favorites include the made-in-the-U.S.A. Deodorant stone, which was not tested on animals; "The Greening of Faith" video, which provides "nuggets of wisdom that should nourish Christians and pagans alike"; and the Gentle Floss made of 100 percent vegan wax—are ads playing on the fearful imaginations of all too many in the environmental movement. Consider, for example, an ad for magnetic and electric field meters. One retailer says, "Once you know where radiation is coming from, you can control your exposure by practicing 'prudent avoidance.'"

Prudent avoidance? Most radiation occurs naturally. You probably get more radiation from a day at the beach than



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from a lifetime spent under high-tension wires. But reason is beside the point; eco-capitalists know that paranoids and their money are soon parted.

Indeed, given the hypochondriac leanings of environmentalists, one may expect that soon every block may have at least one New Age parent running up and down the street measuring radiation from telephone and light posts. Just imagine the consequences, which is not hard to do given that an article in *E* conjures up a green utopia—a constant campaign against (who else?) corporate polluters—in a way that closely resembles the preachy advertising in the magazine.

Back in an October 1993 article entitled "Tales From Toxic America"—subtitled "Grassroots Environmentalists Visit Washington, D.C. to shout: 'Al Gore, Read Your Book!'"—writer Will Nixon describes glowingly a Citizen's Clearinghouse for Hazardous Wastes convention: "CCHW members have won many fights, from lobbying McDonald's into dropping its polystyrene clamshell box, to persuading the state of California to stop using toxic weed killer along its highways." But "no matter what the issue, the basic message remains the same: the way to stop the poison is not through scientific studies or legal proceedings, but through political defiance. And the goal is to go from NIMBY to NOPE: Not-In-My-Backyard to Not-On-Planet-Earth."

But how do Greens get from here to there? "Lois Gibbs takes a moment in her speech to push beyond the N words. 'How many of you work with your local PTA, health care center, tenants groups and women's groups?' she asks. Not many raise their hands," Nixon reports. "They must build bridges to other causes, she tells them, and join together to make their own alternative economy, based on waste cleanups, new technologies, sustainable agriculture and good jobs. . . . But for this weekend at least, anything seems possible. 'Can anybody in this room say the word "power"?' Gibbs asks. The room roars back. The P word is bouncing off the walls."

More recently, in the January/February 1995 issue of *E*, an "In Brief" feature (edited by Nixon) heralds the "Earthship" home, a structure built with used tires and dirt. The caption to the accompanying photograph reads: "The Earthship may look like a military bunker, but it treads lightly on the Earth." Hypochondria thus just isn't a public obligation, but a private, personal shepherd to greener pastures, where man's footprints won't be noticed, where—to use that delusional mantra—"We can be one with nature." Understatement: advertising and editorial content in the eco-press act to create a kinetic kook energy. For instance, anti-meat activist Jeremy Rifkin is spotted in the September/October 1993 issue of *E* preaching in support of the pure foods campaign. "Food will be the battleground of a new green politics in the 1990's," he says. "On the one hand lies a future of genetic engineering, high-tech foods and synthetic, industrial food production. On the other, a future of sustainable, ecological agriculture that preserves our soil, our family and our planet's biodiversity."

Rifkin's blather could have been lifted from or superimposed over the Coalition for Non-Violent Food ad. Thankfully, you will not find that sort of paid sermon in *Garbage*. As Poore says in the January/February 1995 issue, "The unrelenting flood of humorless words [from the environmentally-concerned and correct] tells me instead that environmentalism has become a religion of shalt nots."

*Jim Christie is a Seattle-based writer.*

## EDUCATION

# Socialization as Schooling

***by B.K. Eakman***

For 30 years, elementary and secondary education has been taking on a new orientation, away from substantive subject matter toward a mental health agenda. Personality development—i.e., the "whole child" concept of education—has become the primary focus of schooling. Collection of psychological data on minors, and its storage in nonsecure, cross-referenceable facilities, without the prior notification much less the consent of parent or guardians, has launched a new era in the debate over privacy rights, while undermining traditional parental prerogatives in directing the education and moral development of their children. An ever-increasing nationalization of policy and management structure has further weakened involvement in education through such outlets as community associations and school boards.

In short, public education today is directing the bulk of its energies toward such pursuits as "self-esteem," "intervention," condom distribution, and social services rather than developing proficiency, literacy, or the tools for financial independence. Eventually, even the most dedicated parents tire of the battle and decline to participate further in the education process.

On an unprecedented scale, education policymakers at the national and state levels are infusing subject-oriented curricula with materials referred to in the vernacular as "strands." These are intended to mold the opinions of young people. If unsuccessful, corrective strategies (some of them bordering on the subliminal) are brought in to "remediate" viewpoints considered "inappropriate," or otherwise undesirable, by a vastly overrated behavioral science community.

Testing companies, which are staffed primarily with behavioral scientists rather than educators, are bringing into the classroom massive quantities of tests and surveys, under the fraudulent labels "achievement," "aptitude," and "assessment testing," which are explicitly designed to elicit *and predict* the viewpoints and proclivities of youngsters and their parents. Selected "strands," or minicourses, are then supposed to "modify" students' opinions and behaviors. The scope of this activity in public education is particularly troubling, as it threatens on a nationwide scale student individuality and the constitutionally protected right to conscience.

When combined with the current level of sophistication in record-keeping, this deceptive testing-programming-remediating scheme portends a dossier-building capability which, in the hands of political opportunists, is leading us all unknowingly to the breakdown of the democratic process. Even many who initially applauded these innovations are beginning to wonder what would happen if the political winds shifted and a



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different political faction ruled the roost—with another 10 years of computer technology under its belt.

Meanwhile, education buzzwords are crafted so as to project an image far different from what they mean. "World-Class Standards," "Core Curriculum," "Education/Goals 2000," "Life-Role Competencies," "Higher Order Thinking Skills": none of these refers to academics, substantive knowledge, or even literacy. All are part of prepackaged advertising campaigns, designed by national task forces (not by local communities) to bring a positive response from legislators just long enough for some coveted initiative to be passed into law, or at least to become institutionalized if not exactly legal. Should a term elicit too much negative public reaction, then professional manipulators, called "facilitators," are brought in from outside the community for damage control, and the terminology is changed to buy time to deflect the criticism. Thus did "global education" become "multiculturalism"; "school reform" was born again as "restructuring"; and "situation ethics" has been reintroduced as "ethical judgment." The substance of such programs, however, never changes, regardless of which political party is in power or what local communities want.

National "restructuring"—which includes "outcome-based" and "performance-based" education, "results-based monitoring," etc.—means just one thing: indefinite, nonacademic, touchy-feely objectives tied to a computer technology with the capability to monitor and track individual reactions and responses over time. These are stored as electronic files, for sale to any "researcher" who can pay. Personal identifiers permit these records to be linked with still other computerized data on individuals and demographic groups so that information brokers can link up to various public and private information, from census to income tax records. Using the compiled data, slick campaigns and "messages" can be targeted to specific subpopulations, neighborhoods, even to individual students sitting in the classroom, via computer terminal.

Parents—indeed, the public in general—must understand that, in education, they are not dealing simply with teachers who want to help their children learn, but with behavioral scientists whose starting point is that professionals know better than parents how to raise children. These pseudoscientists view education as socialization, pure and simple. Parents are seen as impediments because of some supposed, exponentially growing generation gap. The answer, they say, is to remove the child as early as possible from the offending parental environment.

Most people think this wisdom refers only to children of incompetent, negligent, and irresponsible parents. But in the end, *all* parents are viewed as wanting, and new policies are applied across the board. Such warped fanaticism is not going to be easily countered with specious arguments, open forums, and parent-teacher conferences. It can only be addressed through the force of law.

Some folks apparently have gotten that message. In April 1993, more than 10,000 parents opted out of Texas's state assessment, the Norm-Referenced Assessment Program. In November of that year, a thousand parents gathered in protest outside Pennsylvania's state capitol building in Harrisburg, with 150 of their legislators' blessings. Then, a little monthly newspaper began circulating out of Iowa, *The Free World Research Report*, publicizing to a now-nationwide readership the status of copycat education legislation in various states, buzz phrases that emerge out of nowhere and are institutionalized, and information ranging from state-regional-federal computer networks to the "whole language" approach to reading instruction.

Moreover, there is a growing resistance movement that refuses to be relegated to serving cookies and punch at the PTA, while their representatives rubber-stamp directives from On High. Thousands of maverick citizens groups and parents who, just five years ago, were told they were the only "oddballs" questioning their schools (and getting the runaround), are no longer "home alone." Today, they are networking, too—on Prodigy, Compuserve, and even on the Internet. They are demanding to see copies of standardized tests and insisting on signoff prior to any psychological probing or programming. They are saying "good riddance" to bogus child management theories of the 60's and electing school boards with backbone to represent parental interests.

But the going is tough. Pervasive data trafficking and privacy rights violations are presenting significant challenges over which parents have already lost any meaningful control. Let us hope there is still time to rescue our schools.

*B.K. Eakman is the author, most recently, of* Microchipped: How the Education Establishment Took Us Beyond Big Brother.


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Baptists, Fundamentalists, and Orthodox Jews are right: The Bible is literal truth. The world was created, fossils and all, in 7 days.

**HOW?** He made it out of 3-D Fractals. In the beginning was the Word. 3-D Fractals are the visible echoes. They make all we see.

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## FAMILY

# Licensing Parents

*by Christopher Check*

*Licensing Parents*, a new book by University of Wisconsin psychiatrist Jack C. Westman, bewails a recent surge in "incompetent parenting," a phenomenon which he defines as depriving a child not only of sufficient food, clothing, and shelter, but also of "affectionate holding, touching and talking," all the while displaying an "insensitivity to a child's initiatives and reactions." The result? An unacceptable number of miserable American children who, on reaching adulthood, spend their lives making the rest of us miserable. But Dr. Westman, "an esteemed child advocate," has a solution: national "parenting" standards and licenses only for those who measure up. Sweeping as it is, his plan does not outline a policy on license renewal and fails to include provisions. Nor does his plan provide for curbing procreation by the unworthy.

Dr. Westman's plan is an idea whose time has come. But before we take up the question of licensing parents, we should look into the credentials of people like Jack C. Westman, for presumably it is they who will hold the licenses. An army of professional life-repairers has descended upon us—therapists, psychiatrists, social workers, counselors, et al.—brandishing certificates that are worth as much as the diploma conferred upon the Scarecrow by the Wizard of Oz. Who are they, really?

Many if not most "substance abuse" counselors proclaim that they are their own trade's best customers. Today's 12-step counselors (pick your addiction) are yesterday's addicts. Of course, if they had really stopped being addicts, they would not remain in a state of perpetual therapy. The social workers who perform hostile takeovers of poor families are not always models of correctness. A Massachusetts social worker recently applied his cutting and pasting skills to join the photographed head of his 61-year-old female colleague to the photographed body of a woman of fewer years (and fewer clothes) whose pose implied the phallic utility of a certain tropical fruit. Even Ellen Goodman was shocked, wondering how anyone "trained in the human skills" could behave so badly.

For all we know, Jack Westman may be a fine family man, gracefully aging with his first wife; but does not the "public's right to know" and the principle of "truth in labeling" demand that we err on the side of caution and require complete disclosure of all who presume to treat our ills and reform our conduct? How many counselors are divorced, how many psychiatrists abuse drugs, seduce patients, or commit suicide?

America's most famous marriage counselors, for example, twins Ann and Abbey, are themselves veterans of divorce, and the duchess of beautiful living, Alexandra Stoddard, whose formula for happiness comprises equal parts of parchment, silk, and humanism is also enjoying her second go-around. The record, however, may be held by radio talk show shrink Barbara De Angelis, who is on her fifth husband; her qualifications as a marriage counselor apparently increase with each matrimonial experience.

Is it just the superstar shrinks whose marriages wither under the gaze of the public eye? Well, no. The rates of divorce are uncommonly high among even the average purveyors of social "medicine." And indeed, high rates of divorce tell only part of the story. Witness the recent report that a large number of Illinois DCFS workers are themselves delinquent on their child support payments. Who will counsel the counselors or license the licensers?

In times past we had a system of licensing parents, and the licenser was Dad. In the Christian era, it is true, the Church protected a girl from marrying against her will, but on the other hand, a marriage without the consent of the bride's father was uncommon, if not invalid. In more recent times, even after the father's blessing was relegated to the status of something nice to have, the Church made every effort to marry couples singularly committed not only to lifelong unity but to rearing as Christians all the children that God might send. The hoops, for example, that an interfaith couple of a generation ago were forced to jump through bear witness to how seriously the Church viewed its responsibility not only to get the right people together but to keep the wrong people apart. The rights of parents, along with the Church's scrutiny, have been replaced by therapeutic handholding.

Having ourselves exiled fathers and the Church, however, we have no right to take offense at what has crawled in to fill the void. And as long as we are numb and happy in our delusion, we will not have to read "failure to form the soul of one's child" among Dr. Westman's list of childrearing sins. Measured by this, the only real "parenting" standard, many more American children are consigned to misery than Dr. Westman's statistics suggest.

*Christopher Check is the associate editor of* The Family in America, *a publication of The Rockford Institute.*

## LIBERAL ARTS

### FEMINIST PARADOX

"I think I understand what you're like now. You're very beautiful and think men are only interested in you because you're beautiful. But you want them to be interested in you because you're you. The problem is, aside from all that beauty, you're not very interesting, you're rude, you're hostile, you're sullen, you're withdrawn. I know, you want someone to look past all that, at the real person underneath. But the only reason that anyone would bother to look past all that is because you're beautiful. Ironic, isn't it? In an odd way, you're your own problem."

*—Jack Nicholson to Michelle Pfeiffer in Mike Nichols' film* Wolf *(1994).*



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# Dusica Savic Benghiat

Since 1974 Dusica Savic Benghiat has been living and working in California, where her paintings have attracted a good deal of attention. Born and educated in Belgrade, she was trained in archeology and did postgraduate work in prehistoric archeology. Not accidentally, her work has affinities with early European art, including the wall paintings of Pompeii.

Dusica's paintings have been exhibited in 15 one-woman shows in Europe and the United States, and because of the richly descriptive quality of her work, she has been in demand as a book illustrator. The Renaissance quality of her paintings has been noted more than once; however, it is not of Florence but of Venice that one thinks, particularly the Venetian empire in Dalmatia from which her family springs—a crossroads of East and West, Byzantium and Rome. And yet, as Irina Subotic has written, these paintings owe a great deal to the wider horizons offered by her American sojourn.

—*Thomas Fleming*

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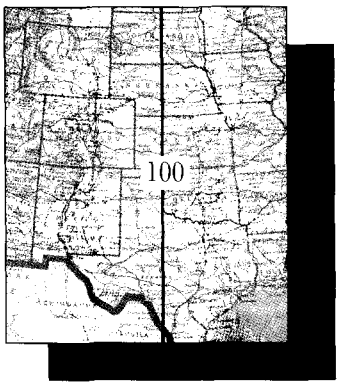
# The Hundredth Meridian

*by Chilton Williamson, Jr.*

## Papagueria: I




"The whole place would be abandoned if it weren't an Indian reservation," Bernard Fontana was saying, "like so much of rural America these days. There are a lot of people on the reservation who wake up in the morning knowing that what they're going to do today isn't worth sh-t. That may be true of the rest of us, too, but we can still kid ourselves about it. The Papagos can't kid themselves any longer."

Professor Fontana, an ethologist and field historian at the University of Arizona, has studied the history and culture of the Papago Indians for 39 years. In his large and comfortable office in the University Library, tightly sealed behind plate glass and steel, we talked without interruption by the regular flights of military jets lowering above the campus to the David Monthan Air Force Base southeast of Tucson. Fontana's book *Of Earth and Little Rain: The Papago Indians* describes the people of *Pimería Alta* (the name given by the Spaniards to the aborigines they discovered living north of the upper Rio San Miguel in the present-day state of Sonora, Mexico) as "bearers of an ancient and eminently successful desert culture," wholly self-sufficient, which developed its own religious, linguistic, social, political, and economic systems, as well as a technological and material culture consonant with the harsh environment in which it had evolved. "I can't imagine anything worse than being a young person on the reservation today," Professor Fontana continued. "The Navajos and Hopis are selling jewelry to the tourists at the San Xavier Mission, but the Papagos refuse to stoop to tourism. They have the best part of the Sonoran Desert—Have you been out there yet? It's beautiful country—which they could use if they wanted to for tourist development, dude ranching and so forth, as the Apaches on the Fort Apache Reservation have done; but the Papago ranchers, who are the wealthiest and most powerful members of the tribe, hate tourists and don't want anything to do with them, and they have managed to prevent this kind of development. It isn't a white-versus-Indian situation, it's a tourist-versus-rancher one. Also, there are no Papagos qualified to manage dude ranches, motels, and recreational facilities, unlike the Apaches who have sent their children to school to learn law, biology, and hotel management. All of their income—other than from cattle ranching—comes from public monies. A major blow was the end of the cotton fields along the Gila River and at its mouth. So was mechanization. Papagos were the agricultural stoop labor force here. The work force petered out in the late 50's and early 60's, then hit bottom in the mid-60's, coinciding with the Great Society programs. Until then, the Bureau of Indian Affairs held the purse strings on the reservation; after that, money was pumped directly into tribal politics. There is very little communication between Papagos and whites, although one-on-one relationships seem to work where groups versus individuals do not. It's strange that people living on so large an area of land can be so isolated, but some of the worst of the white exploiters have done remarkably well out here—lawyers driving up in pink Cadillacs to take the Indians out to wine and dine them in fancy restaurants on their own money. And a huge retainer went to a Chicano lawyer, who probably couldn't get any other work, to do something or other for the Papago Indians in Mexico, of whom there are 250 or 300. The point is, there *isn't* anything for him to do. The Mexican government regards the Papagos on its side of the border as Mexican citizens, pure and simple—not as Indians or some kind of minority group. Right now it's like World War III down here, with all the drug smuggling and the illegals coming across. The reservation south of Highway 86 to the border has been closed for about ten years now to anybody who isn't a tribal member. The Papagos want to know exactly who's running around down there and what they're up to." He paused. "It's pretty hard to get any field research done in Mexico these days."

San Francisco Xavier, in effigy, lay extended beneath a covering of satin drawn up almost as far as his brown carved features. Two plastic hospital bracelets were pinned to the robe, also a plastic holder containing a note written with a bleary ballpoint pen. The note said, "Honey, may this Saint take care of you like it did me, Love Frank." Flowers, both real and artificial, lay strewn on the catafalque. The Papagos once called the San Xavier Indians *Wakon O'odham*, the Baptized People, a fact suggesting that they were the earliest converts to Christianity among the Piman Indians, first missionized by Father Eusebio Kino, a Jesuit priest born near the city of Trent in the Tyrolean Alps in 1635 who crossed the "rim of Christendom" in 1687, six years after his arrival in New Spain. (Father Luis Velarde, Kino's successor, was the first man to refer to the "*Papabotas*" or "bean-eaters," whose principle staple in those times was *javapi*.) Although the Pimans are proved not to be descended from the Anasazi, they and the Papagos were cultivating corn at least as early as A.D. 700. Bernard Fontana believes that the people who called themselves *O'odham* actually represented a variety of Indian peoples, all of whom spoke recognizable variations of a single language. For 18th-century Europeans, "Papagos" were the desert-dwelling Indians of south-central modern Arizona. These "two-village Papagos," by summering in the valleys where they raised crops and threw up brush dams to catch the water from summer storms, and wintering in the foothills by the springs, combined agricultural life with nomadism. Initially uninterested in the livestock as well as in the religion to which Father Kino introduced them, in time they accepted not only these but the winter wheat the missionaries had brought and that grew remarkably well in the desert valleys. Also they adopted, in addition to the Catholic liturgy, the new architectural forms, metal tools, floodplain agricul-



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ture—even the Spanish language and Western dress. The Papagos were militarily allied at the beginning of the 19th century with the Spaniards against the Apaches. In 1775 the government of New Spain transferred its *presidio* north 50 miles from Tubac to the *O'odham* village of Tucson, which lost immediately and forever its character as an Indian community. The Gadsden Purchase Treaty between the United States and Mexico catastrophically divided the *Pimería Alta* in 1853. The Americans left their Papagos in legal limbo until 1924, when the federal government extended citizenship to all Indians; the Mexicans simply added theirs to the rest of the people of Mexico. In 1874 President Grant gave the Mission San Xavier del Bac and 71,000 acres surrounding it to the Papagos for their sole use and benefit. To this were added in 1882 the Gila Bend Reservation, a tract of 48,600 acres on the Gila River, and, in 1916, the Papago Indian Reservation, created by executive order. The three reservations together comprise about 2,800,000 acres, second only in size to the Navajo Reservation. "For three centuries," Professor Fontana has written, "Papagos have been encouraged . . . to become Spaniards, Mexicans, and Anglo-Americans. The results to date have been very uneven; the process continues and perhaps always will. What is remarkable is that there remains a people, the 'Papagos,' whose constituents go right on thinking and behaving in ways that are uniquely their own."

Today, San Xavier del Bac on the San Xavier reservation immediately south of Tucson is the only mission founded by Father Kino that is still in the possession of the Indians. Though the church is a Papago parish, the Indian women across the road tending their cook fires and selling fry bread to the tourists in a sweet haze of mesquite smoke are Navajos; so are those displaying jewelry laid out in glass cases stickered with Visa, Mastercard, and American Express labels. Beside the church, which was completed in 1798, the simple homes of the Papagos themselves stand on bare dirt lots by the San Xavier School. At the top of the lava hill beside the mission the Grotto of the Blessed Virgin, made a shrine by the Bishop of Tucson in 1908 fifty years after Our Lady's appearance there, yawns. The hill, covered by pancake pear, barrel cactus, and trash, is surmounted by a simple white-painted cross. Beyond the flat brown fields divided by irrigation ditches the commercial jets lift off from the runways of Tucson International Airport while the Indians, oblivious to the thunder of the engines, pray on their knees before the holy shrine.

Mike Rios was a handsome strong-looking man in his 50's, like most Papagos stocky and of relatively short stature. From his desk at tribal council headquarters in a doublewide trailer between the school and the mission, he spoke bitterly of the water-rights case he was busy with involving the Tohono O'odham (as the Papago tribe is officially known), the City of Tucson, and the State of Arizona, but when I asked him what the chief problem today on the reservation is, he folded his arms on his stomach and gave me a look. "I'm trying to think what you're going to do with it," he said after a long pause. "I didn't come here to put anybody on the spot," I told him. We grinned at one another and went out to eat a late lunch together.

We drank iced tea and ate chimichanga while Mike talked of the reservation and its troubles. "I remember the water situation being bad in 1974-75, so the problem we're having today is not a matter of Tucson's development. Water has to be trucked out to the cattle; many die every summer. We need to develop a range management plan, but it's all talk so far. The cattle people understand that it is a question of livestock reduction, but for them that is the equivalent of bank-account reduction and status reduction. Alcoholism and teen pregnancy are the greatest problems on the reservation. Pregnancy among unwedded girls used to be a stigma as recently as when I was a boy; today it's an acceptable thing. Also the tribe is gradually losing its language. Community bonds are breaking down. Neighbors no longer take potluck dinners, beans and so forth, to bereaved families, who receive little mental and spiritual support. In fact, somebody might be holding a dance that afternoon. In religion, I see clashes. I myself have my own way of believing. At the same time, you try to accommodate to being a Catholic or to other religions that have surfaced. I'm one of them. Nobody asked me to be baptized, to be a Catholic. People are always asking me why I don't go to church. When they ask me I say, 'No religion.' I even tell them that when I go to St. Mary's Hospital in Tucson. They look at me as if to say, 'Then what are you doing here?'

"I spent 20 years living off the reservation, in Cleveland. If I could survive in Cleveland, I could survive anywhere. When I was in Cleveland, out of curiosity and for self-education I went to 16 different churches. When I got back home I found Protestantism and other religions that weren't there before, including the Native American Church—you know, sweat lodges. Papagos didn't use to do any of that. Even those rites aren't being performed correctly by the standards of the Native American Church. But anyway: I'm one of the few fortunate Papagos. I've really seen the good and the bad. People that have never been away will condemn things that they see going on that are not traditional with us. People here who never leave, go to church, it's hard for them. Put them in Cleveland, I think they'd go crazy."

When I asked if the tribe were not trapped between the two sides in the drug-smuggling situation, he countered gruffly, "Are we? Drugs may be a problem to Customs, Immigration, and Washington—not necessarily to the Papagos. So what if you make a few bucks hauling pot across the border and hauling it out, and handling illegal aliens? So be it. There are no industries on the reservation, government benefits only. People have to do it. The money's not taxable, or reportable to social services. Great. Anyway, the trouble is over here, the American addicts. We need the money on the Indian reservation, not for the president of Nicaragua." I wanted to know what he thought ought to be done with the aid money, and Mike replied, "Find something that's manufacturable and put people to work; find a market for what they manufacture. But all this SBA paperwork is impossible."

We had taken my Land Cruiser to the restaurant because Mike Rios's pickup truck was inoperable, awaiting major repair work. I drove Mike back to headquarters, and spent the rest of the afternoon inspecting the old mission church. I stayed until evening, when an elderly Mexican couple rehearsed their wedding ceremony while outside the Navajo women packed up their wares and extinguished the cook fires. In the small chapel beside the church, votive candles fluttering in green, red, and yellow glasses repeated the colors of the western sky, and gave them movement. On the shadowed summit of the lava hill, the ghostly cross glowed palely. c



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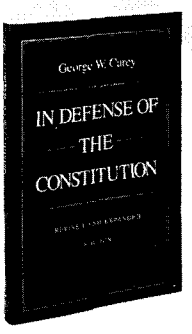


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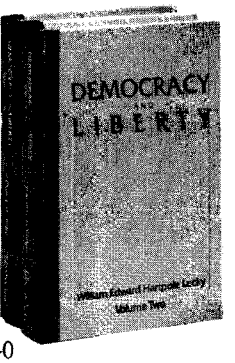


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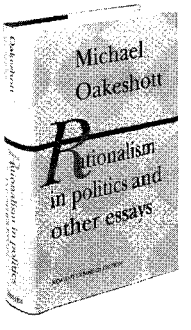


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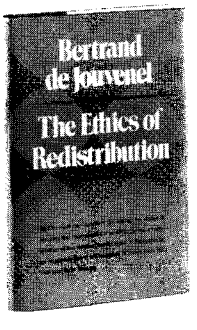


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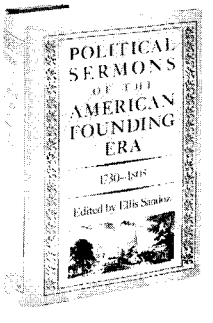


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